

NH Coalition to End Homelessness

May 5, 2025

Chairman James Gray
Senate Finance Committee
State House Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairman Gray and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

On behalf of the New Hampshire emergency shelter providers listed below, we are writing to ask for your support in including the appropriation detailed in Senate Bill 113, making appropriations to the Department of Health and Human Services for homeless services and homeless prevention, in the state budget.

State of Homelessness in New Hampshire

Homelessness and housing instability remain urgent and escalating challenges across the Granite State, according to New Hampshire's annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count—a snapshot of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night in January.

The growth in unsheltered homelessness (those staying on the streets, or in a tent or car, for example) from 2019 to 2024 is especially concerning. **Between 2019 and 2024, the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness increased nearly fourfold, from 149 to 579 individuals, with an over 70% increase from 2023 to 2024 alone.** As a result of the significant increase over this time period, emergency shelters have faced a substantial rise in demand while also struggling to maintain existing capacity. **From 2019 to 2024, the number of individuals staying in emergency shelters increased by 44%, including an 18% increase in families** using family shelter beds on the night of the PIT Count. These figures reflect only those who were able to access a shelter bed that night—many others were turned away or had no safe place to go due to limited capacity.

These numbers, however, represent the floor, not the ceiling. The PIT Count captures only those who were able to access a shelter bed that evening. January is arguably the one time of year when someone experiencing homelessness is most likely to find some way to get indoors—often temporarily staying with friends, relatives, or acquaintances in unstable or overcrowded situations. These arrangements are rarely sustainable and can place significant strain on host households, sometimes pushing them into housing instability as well. **Limited shelter capacity further constrains the count: with more available beds, these figures would almost certainly be even higher.**

Beyond the PIT Count, broader data reinforces the strain on New Hampshire's housing and shelter systems. **In 2024 alone, housing-related issues dominated calls to 211, New Hampshire's information and referral system, with over 10,000 requests for emergency shelter and housing assistance.** Searches for shelter beds, rental support, and low-cost housing consistently rank among the most frequent—yet shelter availability remains critically low, too often leaving people with no safe place to go.

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State Grant-in-Aid (SGIA) Shelter Program

NH DHHS contracts with 13 organizations to provide homeless shelter services around the state. New Hampshire's shelters are a vital safety net for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Yet, they remain chronically underfunded and overly dependent on private donations to sustain operations. Last year, the Legislature approved a \$2,500,000 supplemental budget item (SB 406, 2024) to keep the doors open with contracted organizations. This increased the total FY 25 appropriation to \$7,431,743, which Governor Ayotte and the NH House of Representatives level funded in the state budget. **Even after the addition of these funds, some of the largest shelters have faced such severe financial hardship that they have had to consider closing, or closing part-time, due to limited resources.**

Senate Bill 113, which passed the Senate on a 23-0 vote prior to being tabled for consideration in the budget, would appropriate \$12,000,000 per year for emergency shelter contracts. This increase would assist emergency shelters with rising costs and help meet the increased need for services. **As shelter providers testified at the Senate Bill 113 hearing, these funds amount to less than half of operating costs.**

Saving Municipalities Financial Resources

If the allocations in SB 113 are not included in the state budget, it would have significant consequences across the state. Underfunding the emergency shelter system would leave organizations in the position to assess whether they are able to maintain their current bed count, which is already inadequate to meet the need in the state. With shelters already reporting being at or near capacity on a nightly basis, NH cannot risk the closure of beds, which would increase unsheltered homelessness even more. Underfunding the emergency shelter system would also impact municipalities, as **it would downshift costs to local welfare departments.** Less case management services through shelter providers would drive an increase in the length of time individuals and families are homeless. **A chronically homeless individual (12+ months homeless) costs taxpayers an average of \$35,000 annually** due to increased emergency room visits, hospital stays, and other expenses. **Without sufficient shelter capacity, municipal welfare departments are paying \$100–\$400 per night to place families in hotels,** and hospitals incur up to \$1,600 per day to house individuals medically cleared for discharge but with nowhere to go. Local businesses will be affected as the unsheltered population continues to grow, and more people stay in commercial doorways as the safest option they have at their disposal. Police and EMS calls will increase, as will demand on NH's community mental health centers' Rapid Response system that manages mental health crises. By sustaining our existing shelter capacity, NH can provide immediate relief for those in need, reduce reliance on costly alternatives, and foster long-term stability.

In Closing

With the significant increases NH has experienced in unsheltered homelessness, access to emergency shelter and connected services has become even more crucial in supporting NH's most vulnerable residents. It is critical that we continue to amply fund NH's emergency shelters through State Grant in Aid (SGIA) dollars. Shelter beds, while not a permanent solution, are a key part of the spectrum of supportive housing options needed to aid people experiencing homelessness in their journey to stability and avoid costly alternatives that do not serve to solve the issue of homelessness in the state. **As such, we respectfully encourage the members of this committee to vote in support of the inclusion of SB 113 in the budget.**

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Respectfully,



Jennifer Chisholm, LICSW, MLADC
Executive Director
NH Coalition to End Homelessness



Maria Devlin
President and CEO
Families in Transition



Jane L. Goodman, MSPH
Executive Director
Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter, Inc.



Nancy J. McKeon
Executive Director
Friends Program, Inc.



Maryse Wirbal
CEO
The Front Door Agency, Inc.

Pamela Wellman
Executive Director
Family Promise of Southern New Hampshire



Kara Anne Rodenhizer, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Home for All Coalition



Susan M. Ford
Executive Director
My Friend's Place



Karen M. Jantzen, MPA
Executive Director
Concord Coalition to End Homelessness



Betsey Andrews Parker
CEO
Community Action Partnership of Strafford County



Nick Taylor
Director
Housing Action NH