

Policy Recommendations of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

(Approved by State ICH 11.2.17)

Introduction:

The Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) was established in 2014 to examine statewide initiatives and recommend policy solutions to end homelessness in Maryland. The ICH recognizes that homelessness and poverty are – at their root – caused and sustained through a system of social and economic oppression and marginalization. As tasked by the General Assembly during its founding, the ICH identified a broad platform of policy priorities and recommendations for the 2018 Legislative Session that address specific issues throughout this system to alleviate and prevent homelessness. These priorities have been grouped into three categories: legislative, budget, and administrative.

- *Legislative priorities are those that the Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness and other policymakers can consider advancing through legislation.*
- *Budget priorities are areas where increased funding and effective distribution of resources would help promote best practices and program development.*

Lastly, the ICH wanted policymakers to be aware of administrative priorities where changes can be made through state or local government agencies, or other regulatory bodies. Taken together, these policy recommendations provide tangible steps towards addressing and ending homelessness in Maryland.

Policy Recommendations Pertaining to State Budget:

- 1) ***Reduce non-chronic homelessness by 50% over 3 years*** - through increased funding for rental assistance for rapid rehousing (90%) and creation of a state-funded bridge subsidy and increased funding for supportive services offered in permanent supportive housing (10%).
 - Year 1 budget request: \$3M in new rental assistance funding to assist 380 households, including veterans, unaccompanied youth, families, and persons with disabilities.
- 2) ***Reduce chronic homelessness by 20% annually*** - through creation of a state-funded bridge subsidy and increased funding for supportive services offered in permanent supportive housing.ⁱ
 - Year 1 budget request: \$10M in rental assistance & services support funding for 547 PSH units.
- 3) ***Increase Funding for training and staffing so providers may lower barriers to emergency shelter and expand coordinated entry services to be in compliance with federal requirements.***
 - Year 1 budget request: \$450K for the first year.ⁱⁱ
- 4) ***Increase funding for providers to offer more respite care programs statewide.***ⁱⁱⁱ
 - Year 1 budget request: \$300K for the first year to get two additional pilot programs open.
- 5) ***Increase funding to ensure all emergency shelters are ADA compliant.***
- 6) ***Increase funding to expand SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Program to increase the number of SOAR certified staff who assist the homeless qualify for federal benefits.***
 - Total budget request \$786K.^{iv}

Support of Upcoming 2018 Legislation:

- 1) ***Support the HOME Act***^v
- 2) ***Support expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to those 18 years and older***
- 3) ***Increase the monthly Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)*** - To provide more than \$185/ month
- 4) ***Support safe consumption sites and alternative treatment options***

Administrative Policy/Process Items:

- 1) ***Work with DHCD to consolidate application for state funded capital, operating and supportive service sources***
- 2) ***Work with DHCD and MDH to expand housing opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness with significant health and social issues:***
 - Explore integrating housing for this population within larger mixed-use developments.
 - Review existing policies – including DHCD’s QAP and MDH’s Medicaid waivers to create a level playing field in the funding awards and funding for housing-related services.
- 3) ***Work with DHCD and other Housing Authorities statewide to increase the use of project-based Section 8 to subsidize PSH projects and create a preference or set-aside for those earning less than 30% AMI.***

ⁱ In partnership with local public housing authorities (PHAs), DHCD, MDH, and MDOD have successfully operated such programs for persons with disabilities and used \$2.1M to house approximately 110 persons. The Bridge Subsidy was in place for up to 3 years and the person transitioned to permanent housing assistance at the end of the Bridge term through the PHA.

ⁱⁱ Funding will be used to expand training and increase clinical staff so shelters can admit and assist higher-need clients year-round. Trainings requested by CoC leadership include Harm reduction, Narcan training and purchase to respond to opioid overdose, mental health first aide and de-escalation training for volunteers and staff.

ⁱⁱⁱ Respite care programs provide higher-level care for those exiting hospitals, requiring additional medical services as they heal and shelter is not an appropriate discharge plan.

^{iv} Currently there are approximately 10 SOAR Case Managers that work with the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health. The additional funding would cover annual costs for 10.5 additional positions to extend existing support coverage. Of those 10.5, 9 are SOAR Specialists, 1 Lawyer to assist with cases that reach the administrative hearing level and 0.5 FTE to technical assistance position.

^v HB 172/SB 728 in the 2017 session--passed the House, but did not make it out of the Senate Judiciary Committee. We would encourage support or an alternative proposal to prevent landlords from denying applicants because a criminal background, or set time limits/parameters for the time period subject to a background check, such as for the past 5 years. DC recently passed similar legislation, and this would also align well with the Second Chance Act. DC Bill: <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/35646/B21-0706-Introduction.pdf>