June 30, 2025

Governor Phil Scott
Office of Governor Phil Scott
109 State Street, Pavilion
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Scott,

We reach out to you on behalf of the City of Burlington and our larger community in response to the harm taking place within the City and state due to the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program changes in Act 113. As you are aware, Chittenden County has long-held roughly one-third of the State's homeless population, and while we recognize households reside in motels outside of the Greater Burlington Area, the majority of our county's unsheltered population resides within the city limits.

As a result of the statewide 80-day motel caps in Act 113, we anticipate at least 100 households will be exited from the program by July 1st in Chittenden County. Included within these households is 35 families with 61 children and 45 people with severe medical vulnerabilities.

Over the past several years, service providers, emergency responders, and local businesses have felt the direct impacts of the mass-unsheltering that have taken place in Vermont. Dozens of families with very young children and people with acute medical and mental health needs will be living in tents and sleeping on benches and sidewalks throughout the City – compounding the already crisis-level number of people living unsheltered already. This situation is untenable and unacceptable.

Burlington has responded to this worsening humanitarian crisis in the following ways and with a significant financial burden on our City budget:

- Working to identify shower sites for children, and coordinated emergency resources for families with children with local school districts
- Established weekly cross-department meetings to address the safety and public health needs of people living in camps on municipal land
- Allocated with unanimous support by the City Council, $50,000 to provide resources including toilets, handwashing stations, refuse removal, camp clean-up, and the provision of basic needs supplies to outreach teams
- Fully funded the Fire Department's Community Response Team, comprised of voluntary off-duty emergency responders, to provide response to overdose incidents and proactively engage people with complex medical issues, many of whom are unsheltered
- Hosted forums with neighborhoods, local businesses, and service providers to hear and respond to community-wide concerns
- Provided City funding to CVOEO's Community Resource Center to serve as a low-barrier daytime shelter
- Provided City funding to expand our county's Coordinated Entry System
- Convened regular meetings of outreach providers from multiple agencies to coordinate efforts
- Operated the Burlington extreme cold weather shelter during the 2024-2025 season, serving over 200 people when temperatures reach -10 degrees

The City's investment in responding to unsheltered homelessness has been significant and is unsustainable. We cannot continue to effectively respond to the number of people living unsheltered, and there will be dire and life-threatening consequences as the seasons rapidly change.

We know we must work to bring more housing of all kinds on-line, and Burlington will continue to be a willing and active partner in this collaborative effort. Motels, hotels, and shelters are only band-aids for Vermont's housing crisis, but unfortunately, they appear to be the only way we will meet the urgent need for shelter right now.

We recognize that you are not solely responsible for the ongoing unsheltering of vulnerable households, and that the changes to the General Assistance Program within Act 113 originated in the legislature and received approval from both chambers.

As leaders of Vermont's largest municipality, and in partnership with service providers we call on you, as Vermont's Governor to take these immediate actions:

- Use your power under the state's emergency management provisions (20 V.S.A. § 1) to proclaim a state of emergency and direct the Vermont Agency of Human Services to use funding to provide within each region of the state 24-hour, trauma-informed, safe, accessible, stable, and non-congregate emergency shelter for vulnerable Vermonters facing exit from the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program on July 1st;
- Rescind the June 4 letter from the Economic Services Division and clarify that the 80-day cap on access to the GA Program is waived during the period covered by the Executive Order 03-25

Additionally, we urge you to work in collaboration with legislative leaders to establish an inter-agency taskforce to develop sustainable, short-term housing solutions that serve as an effective bridge to permanent housing.

Our systems and our workforce are at a breaking point. We need your help. The time to act is now.

In Partnership,

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
Mayor, City of Burlington

Ben Traverse
President, City Council

Gene Bergman
City Councilor, Ward 2

Shawn Burke
Chief, Burlington Police Dept.

Allie Schachter
City Councilor, East District

Ranjit "Buddy" Singh
City Councilor, South District

Michael LaChance
Chief, Burlington Fire Dept.

Sarah Carpenter
City Councilor, Ward 4

Becca Brown McKnight
City Councilor, Ward 6

Melo Grant
City Councilor, Central District

Joe Kane
City Councilor, Ward 3

Evan Litwin
City Councilor, Ward 7

Marek Broderick
City Councilor, Ward 8