

Subject: Increase Funding for Community-Based Housing

March 4, 2024

Dear Delegate Paul E. Krizek, Delegate Carrie Coyner, Delegate Ellen Campbell, Senator Mark Obenshain, Delegate Sam Rasoul, Senator Bryce Reeves, Senator Creigh Deeds, Senator Jennifer Boysko, Senator Adam Ebbin, Delegate Betsy Carr, Delegate C.E. Cliff Hayes, Delegate Luke Torian, Senator Barbara Favola, Delegate M. Keith Hodges, Delegate Mark Sickles,

In order to keep up with rising housing costs and continue to make progress towards meeting our state's need, we must increase funding for community-based housing. These programs enable our neighbors with disabilities to live in the community of their choice, outside of an institutional setting. I urge you to support increased funding for such housing programs through several critical budget items this session:

1) Item 297 #7h and Item 297 #2s: This amendment provides an additional \$2.5 million in FY25 and \$5 million in FY26 from the general fund for permanent supportive housing (PSH) programs for individuals with serious mental illness. There is a shortage of PSH resources for nearly 5,000 adults with SMI leaving hospitals or at risk of homelessness. This funding request would enable DBHDS to provide resources to an additional 300 adults.

2) Item 297 #9h and Item 297 #3s: This amendment provides \$2.5 million each year from the general fund to support the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) which provides rental subsidies for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). Without regular increases to SRAP, Virginia is at risk of falling out of compliance with the DOJ Settlement Agreement. Stagnant funding results in fewer individuals served due to rising rent costs across the state.

3) Item 297 #4h and Item 294 #1s: This amendment adds language to allow the DBHDS to use their Trust Fund to provide community-based housing for a larger population. Currently, only those with intellectual disabilities are eligible, but this amendment would ensure those with developmental disabilities, serious mental illness, or substance use disorders could benefit too. As a result, the DBHDS Trust Fund would make community living possible for more populations who have often been institutionalized.

4) Item 313 #1h (FY24 Caboose Budget): This amendment restores \$10 million that the Governor cut from the FY24 budget for PSH for people with serious mental illness. This cut would reduce the significant gains we attained last year for PSH!

I respectfully request that you include the above amendments in the final state budgets in order to support community-based living and care for those of us with disabilities in Virginia.

HAND is a regional membership collective of over 450 organizations working across the private, public and social sectors to collaborate in the production and preservation of affordable housing in the Capital Region of Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Richmond. A key part of our work is HAND's Housing Indicator Tool, a platform that tracks affordable housing production and preservation across income ranges at the regional and jurisdiction level. It also tracks policies jurisdictions have in place to facilitate

the production and preservation outcomes the region seeks and protect residents from discrimination and displacement. More than just housing, we want to ensure residents across the region have the support they need to thrive. It is critical to continue to invest in permanent supportive housing to make this a reality.

Sincerely,
Taylor Phillips