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Homelessness Providers Call for American Rescue Plan Act to Support the State's Homeless Crisis Response System

Advocates seek to prevent a drastic increase in people experiencing homelessness



Hartford, Conn — The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), Reaching Home, and the Corporation for Supporting Housing (CSH) rallied at the Capitol on Tuesday to demand that policy makers do not leave homelessness out of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) negotiations.

Providers and advocates highlighted that while the State of Connecticut is slated to receive more than \$2B in ARPA funding, neither Governor Ned Lamont, nor leaders of the legislature's Appropriations Committee, has included resources for homelessness in their allocation plans. Advocates warn that if homelessness is left out of the ARPA negotiations, homelessness in communities across the state will drastically increase.

Homeless service providers have been able to utilize CARES Act funding to decompress shelters, move 3,000 households into housing and prevent a further health crisis due to COVID-19. Homelessness in Connecticut has been on a decrease including a 22.8% since last year. However, CARES Act dollars have not addressed the historic underfunding of the homeless crisis response system. These funds that were used to address the increased need during the COVID-19 pandemic will expire on September 30, 2022.

“Connecticut has long been a leader in fighting homelessness, but that’s all for nothing if we don’t continue to assist and help everyone we can,” said Senator Saud Anwar (D-East Hartford). “To leave homelessness out of these important negotiations is to forget about the thousands of families at risk right now and their stark need for support and help. We need to invest in ending homelessness and providing resources for those in need now more than ever.”

"Homeless service providers across the state have been able to utilize CARES Act funding to decompress shelters, move 3,000 households into housing and prevent a further health crisis due to COVID-19," said Sarah Fox Director of Policy at CCEH. "Homelessness must be included in ARPA funding allocations; without continued emergency funding our system will be ill-equipped to continue to manage the ongoing effects of the pandemic on our most vulnerable residents."

“In 2019 Columbus House sheltered or kept warm about 1000 unsheltered people. Almost two thirds of them were in programs without a single dollar of state funding. It is wrong that the state doesn’t fund its emergency housing response, but when there is a historic influx in federal dollars we must embrace the opportunity to treat all people with dignity," said Margaret Middleton, Chief Executive Officer from Columbus House.

"As a leader in this country on the difficult issues of solving homelessness and eradicating racial inequities, the state of Connecticut is uniquely positioned to keep making strides in our goal to ensure that every member of our collective communities has housing stability." said Sonya Jelks, Connecticut Director at CSH. "The American Rescue Plan offers us an opportunity to continue to have progress in Connecticut and to invest in solutions and programs that help to keep many of our Connecticut residents off the street and safely housed. The governor and legislative budgets must reflect the needs of the community and housing stability is one of the most vital needs for all in Connecticut."

“Governments and agencies play an important role in setting goals and policies to reduce the number of unsheltered homeless people. This is the work of faith communities. And holy everyday people, saints and sinners just trying to follow the commandment — “Love one another as I have loved you,” said Pastor Kelcy G.L. Steele, Lead of Neighborhood & Faith-Based Partnerships at Supportive Housing Works.

“Connecticut has always been a national leader when it comes to finding the best and most efficient way to end homelessness. With funding, innovative thinking and sheer collective will, homeless service providers throughout Connecticut managed not only to house people during a global pandemic, we have saved lives too,” said Kara Capone CEO of Community Housing Advocates, Inc. “The work we do is essential and now is not the time for the legislature to forget all the good we have done and all that we have yet to accomplish. We cannot backslide on the progress we have made and the State of Connecticut should continue to invest in our work along with the men, women and children we serve.”