Ending chronic homelessness is urgent, yet possible

Ending chronic homelessness is urgent. Too many of our neighbors are dying young of preventable and manageable diseases. Ending chronic homelessness is also possible. D.C. has a plan to end homelessness (Homeward D.C.) and we need to get serious about funding it. The Way Home Campaign calls on Mayor Bowser to invest $31 million in housing solutions for 1,620 individuals and $9.7 million for 309 families in fiscal year 2019. Surely D.C. can invest less than half a percent of our $14 billion budget to ensure our most vulnerable neighbors have a safe place to call home.

TWHC BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

1) Increase resources for housing for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness

According to recent data collected through the Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement (CAHP) system, there are over 4,500 individuals currently experiencing (chronic AND non-chronic) homelessness in the District. Of this amount, 1,909 individuals have been assessed through the VI-SPDAT, with 820 individuals scoring for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH); and 800 scoring for Rapid Rehousing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended # of units/slots</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSH (units)</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAH (units)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRH (slots)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Invest $19.6 million in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for 820 additional individuals**
  Research and experience show that Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), using the Housing First model, is one of the best ways to end chronic homelessness. In D.C., programs like the DHS PSH Program help residents who have experienced homelessness for years to achieve and maintain housing stability and to improve their health. For FY19, it is estimated that, at minimum, 820 units of PSH are needed for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. The Way Home strongly recommends that $19.6 million be allocated to end homelessness for these individuals who are most at risk of dying on the streets or in shelter.

- **Invest $7.1 million for Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH) for 400 additional individuals**
  Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH) is designed to meet the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness who either no longer need PSH or who need permanent housing assistance. Funding this strategic intervention allows us to target our resources effectively and ensures that individuals can move quickly through the homeless services system. Given the vast number of singles experiencing homelessness and the need to be able to match individuals directly to TAH, we estimate that at least 400 units of TAH, costing $7.1 million, are needed in FY19.

- **Invest at least $4.2 million in Rapid Re-housing (RRH) for 400 individuals**
  Rapid Re-housing helps individuals to find housing, pay for housing (through short-term financial and rental assistance), and stay in housing (through support like case management). Among those assessed, about 800 are anticipated to need Rapid Rehousing. Acknowledging that provider capacity is currently limited – and that the program is relatively new – we recommend D.C. invest at least $4.2 million for 400 units of RRH in FY19. We also recommend that the success of the rapid re-housing program for singles be measured by specific outcomes, including housing stability after the subsidy ends.
2) **Invest in permanent housing for families experiencing chronic homelessness ($9.7m)**
Recent estimates indicate that between 10% and 20% of families currently living in shelter or in Rapid Rehousing need Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Taking the midpoint of this range (15%), *The Way Home* recommends that D.C. invest $9.7 million to provide 309 families currently living in shelter or in Rapid Rehousing with PSH.

3) **Invest in comprehensive homelessness prevention program for singles ($2m)**
D.C. currently lacks a homelessness prevention program for individuals. *The Way Home* Campaign recommends that $2 million be invested to develop a more comprehensive prevention program for individuals at risk of entering homelessness. This program should provide mediation, flexible financial assistance, case management and connection to community resources like Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) employment services, and food/clothing banks.

4) **Increase resources to operate a Downtown Services Center ($2.5m)**
The lack of a Downtown Services Center is, outside of housing, one of the most frequent issues raised by individuals experiencing homelessness in D.C. With the closure of the MLK Library, no indoor space is available to escape the elements. While funding was allocated for the creation of a Downtown Services Center several years ago, the interim location in NE is inconvenient for many. We strongly recommend that $2.5 million be allocated to operate a centrally located respite with a dual focus on connecting people to housing resources and meeting immediate needs. While progress on the construction of a Downtown Services Center is unclear, we approximate that the operating costs of a center, as originally envisioned by the ICH, is $2.5 million.

5) **Improve conditions and services at shelter facilities for singles (at least $1m)**
Homeward D.C. outlines a clear need to improve conditions of shelters for singles. While existing large shelters should eventually be replaced by newer, smaller facilities, we must improve the conditions of existing shelters while a replacement plan is developed. To facilitate residents’ ability to exit homelessness, services must be improved through increased staffing and case management focused on housing assessment, navigation, and support.

6) **Fund Two Public Restrooms and Launch Business Incentive Program ($600,000)**
D.C. has only three public restrooms that are open 24 hours. This leaves many residents, particularly residents experiencing homelessness, with no place to go. The District should invest $600,000 to create two 24-hour standalone public restrooms in high traffic neighborhoods that currently lack them. An additional $200,000 is recommended to offer incentives to businesses to open their bathrooms to the public. We support this proposal in conjunction with the Michael A. Stoops Anti-Discrimination Amendment Act (B22-0397), which is vital to ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness have access to these restrooms.

7) **Ensure continued funding for robust, coordinated outreach, such as CABHI (up to $3m)**
Federal funding for outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness through the Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) in the District will end in FY19. We strongly support Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) plans to work with SAMHSA to extend this funding. If this is not possible, or if DBH is not confident federal funding will be extended through the end of FY19, up to $3 million in local funds should be allocated to DBH to maintain the program. In addition, SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) is essential to many efforts to end homelessness in D.C., and particularly critical to a strong street outreach program. SOAR Specialist positions funded through the CABHI grant have been pivotal in connecting vulnerable residents to income. We strongly recommend that current funding for SOAR be maintained in the FY19 budget and that a multiyear funding mechanism be explored to ensure sustainability of the program.

---

For more information, please contact Lara Pukatch, Director of Advocacy, Miriam’s Kitchen: [lara@miriamskitchen.org](mailto:lara@miriamskitchen.org); or Jill Carmichael, US Director A1:8, National Community Church: [jill.carmichael@theaterchurch.com](mailto:jill.carmichael@theaterchurch.com).