

Alternative Housing Voucher Program & Accessible Affordable Housing Grants Line Items #7004-9030 and #7004-9031

Background:

The Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) provides mobile housing vouchers to low-income individuals with disabilities who are under 60 years of age. AHVP ensures people with disabilities can live independently and with a better quality of life in their own homes instead of facing the impossible choice between homelessness and institutionalization.

The Accessible Affordable Housing Grants (AAHG) offers developers and property owners grants to create or rehabilitate physically accessible housing. Recipients of these grants must prioritize AHVP voucher holders in their tenant selection process. Community Economic Development Assistant Corporation (CEDAC) oversee these funds.

In FY 22, AHVP was funded at \$14.2 million and the AAHG program at \$2.5 million. The Governor's budget allocates \$8.7 million for AHVP and has cut the AAHG funds entirely. As rents rise at near astronomical speed and eviction courts wing into action, we need more housing than ever before.

With an increase in funding over the last few years, AHVP has improved significantly. AHVP now offers security deposit assistance. Housing Authorities are now compensated more fairly for their work on the program. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Independent Living Centers across the state partnered to issue 50 vouchers to get eligible residents of nursing homes back into the community. All of these improvements and experiments were only possible due to the availability of extra funds.

Concerns:

Stabilized housing is the most important factor in someone staying healthy, something especially true for people whose disabilities increase their risk of contracting COVID-19. Over 6,000 people died in Massachusetts nursing homes during COVID-19. Many people are stuck in nursing homes because they don't have accessible, affordable housing to move into. People with disabilities are more than twice as likely as the nondisabled population to experience homelessness and are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing housing insecurity. Even with the ability to pay, accessible apartments are nearly impossible to find.

Recommendation:

Increase funding for line-item #7004-9030 to \$19 million (\$13.5 million + \$5.5 rollover) and reinstate #7004-9301 at \$2.5 million.

This will create more accessible, affordable rental housing targeted at AHVP voucher holders and allow more people currently in nursing homes to regain their safety and freedom by moving them back into their communities so they can contribute and live full, meaningful lives.

For more information, please contact Housing Workgroup Chair: Shaya French sfrench@bostoncil.org

[Issue E-0422-1]