

Yale College Democrats Lobbying Committee Written Testimony

Dear members of the Committee and the public:

As politically aware college students, the members of the Yale College Democrats Lobbying Committee strongly urge this committee to support H.R. 5071. H.R. 5071 increases state funding for supportive housing, which we believe to be an utmost priority for the state.

Supporting Housing is permanent, affordable housing linked to health, mental health, employment, and other support services. It is a proven, cost-effective way to end homelessness for people who face the most complex challenges. By providing chronically homeless people with a way out of expensive emergency public services and back into their own homes and communities, supportive housing not only improves the lives of its residents but also generates significant public savings.

Why We Need Supportive Housing?

- At least a half a million Americans do not have a place to call home each night.
- One percent of all Americans find themselves homeless at some point each year.
- 250,000 American households—including at least 12,000 to 15,000 families with children—have nowhere to call home for years on end.
- Ten percent of those who become homeless every year are people who are homeless for the long term; they use 50 percent of shelter capacity.

Supportive Housing is Cost Effective

It costs essentially the same amount of money to house someone in stable, supportive housing as it does to keep that person homeless and stuck in the revolving door of high-cost crisis care and emergency housing. University of Pennsylvania's Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research recently found in a study tracking 5,000 mentally ill people in New York City for two years while they were homeless and for two years after they were housed:

Supportive and transitional housing created an average annual savings of \$16,282 per unit by reducing the use of public services.

- ☐ 72% of savings resulted from a decline in the use of public health services
- ☐ 23% from a decline in shelter use
- ☐ 5% from reduced incarceration of homeless people with mental illness

This reduction in costs nearly covered the cost of developing, operating, and providing services in supportive housing. After deducting the public benefits, the average supportive housing unit created by a city-state partnership in New York City cost only \$995 per year.

In other words, based on the most conservative assumptions—without taking into account the positive impacts on health status and employment status, or improvements to neighborhoods and communities - it costs little more to permanently house and support people than it does to leave them homeless.

Furthermore, the Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program found that supportive housing improved neighborhood safety and beautification, increasing or stabilizing property values in most communities.

We again strongly urge this Committee's consideration of H.R. 5071 and the positive impact it will create.

Respectfully Yours,

The Yale College Democrats Lobbying Committee