

# Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-145  
AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE HOMELESS RESPONSE  
**Title:** SYSTEM.  
**Vote Date:** 2/29/2024  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations  
**PH Date:** 2/20/2024  
**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Housing Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill serves to appropriate \$18.6 million dollars to the Department of Housing and \$1.4 million dollars to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services from the General Fund in order to enhance the Connecticut's homeless response system. Such a bill was sponsored due to a combination of factors, such as a precipitous increase in homelessness and rate of inflation, leading to the state's homeless response system being overwhelmed at a time when resources are scarcer than ever. As such, elements of the homeless response system like Coordinated Access Networks are communicating the need for flexible funds to help growing numbers of people find permanent housing in a highly competitive rental market. These organizations within the homeless response system are also communicating a desperate need for enough funding to pay their staff livable wages. High turnover for positions like shelter case managers causes delays in getting people housed during periods of recruitment and onboarding, which leads to extended stays in shelters and less capacity to accommodate others.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Expressed.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Thomas Broderick](#): Supports this bill stating that the current homelessness crisis requires an "all-of-the-above" response.

**Billy Bromage, Community Organizer and Housed Ally, Unhoused Activist Community Team (U-ACT)**: Supports this bill stating that it is particularly important that steady funding is provided for warming centers during winter months and cooling centers in summer months, in addition to the need for more shelter beds around Connecticut.

**Carmen Clarkin, Research & Policy Associate, Connecticut Voices for Children (CT Voices)**: Supports this bill stating that additional funding to programs like the state's rental assistance program is essential not just to prevent homelessness, but also to prevent the state from needing to house individuals in emergency shelters which can cost over \$40,000 per year. Additionally, when people do become homeless, it is critical for an individual's well-being to find permanent housing as soon as possible, so funding for housing navigation and mobility services is imperative.

**Donna DellaCamera, Franklin Communities**: Supports this bill.

**Jessica Doll, Executive Director, Connecticut Apartment Association (CTAA)**: Supports this bill.

**Therese Eke, Member, All in for Milford**: Supports this bill stating that while the bill and additional funding is needed to address the problem of homelessness, there must also be changes in zoning and expanding evictions protections.

**Sean Ghio, Policy Director, Partnership for Strong Communities**: Supports this bill.

**Amanda Gordon, Director of CQI and Strategic Innovation, Community Housing Advocates**: Supports this bill stating that while it is necessary, the funding must be annualized in order to bring stability to the program.

**Amy Casavina Hall, Director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH)**: Supports this bill stating that from 2012 to 2021, Connecticut has been a leader in the nation in housing people and keeping people out of homelessness, decreasing annual homelessness by 62%, but that trend has sharply reversed. Therefore, additional funding is needed to keep the states homeless response system in line with the new trends of lower housing availability which leads to more people becoming unhoused.

**Rev. David Horst, Outreach Worker, New London Homeless Hospitality Center**: Supports this bill stating that more annualized funds are needed to support emergency cold weather and shelter response, as well as the coordinated access network hubs.

**Tatianna Irizarry**: Supports this bill.

**Evonne Klein**: Supports this bill stating that ensuring staff has the funding so they can do their job whether through outreach, intake, or matching individuals and families to a home is key to ending homelessness in the state. It is also requested that cold weather funding become a separate line item in the state budget which is consistently funded.

**Agustin Lopez, Director of Specialized Community Services, Mental Health Connecticut, Inc.**: Supports this bill stating that it not only addresses the immediate needs of

those experiencing homelessness but also takes significant steps to address the interconnected challenges of mental health and homelessness.

**Lori McAdam, Alderwoman, Ward 2 New Britain**: Supports this bill.

**John McNamara, Alderman, Ward 4 New Britain**: Supports this bill stating that existing funds are being effectively utilized, but they are not enough amid the current housing crisis so additional funding is needed. While it is believed the current proposal for funding is inadequate in the face of current need as stated by advocates and service providers, any increase in funding should be promptly approved.

**Jim Perras, CEO, Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut, Inc (HRBA)**: Supports this bill.

**Caitlin Rose, CEO, Friendship Service Center**: Supports this bill stating that they cannot pay their staff livable wages and homelessness response system capacities are not to scale with the current housing crisis. As such, there must be even more action taken to prevent homelessness, like stronger rental protections.

**Ari Rosenberg, Executive Director, Association of Religious Communities (ARC)**: Supports this bill stating that ARC opened two homeless shelters in Danbury totaling 40 beds which were quickly filled and there are an additional 40 people on the waiting list, but despite this increased need, DOH has chosen to fund a mere 20 beds in Danbury which is an 80% reduction leaving the city with less shelter support than any other Connecticut city of similar size. Considering this, it seems obvious that programs to fund these shelters are in desperate need of additional funding.

**Miranda Savioli**: Supports this bill stating that those living on the street often have their medications stolen and are more susceptible to contracting skin infections, some of which progress to severe blood stream infections requiring hospitalization. Additionally, more funding to solve the homelessness problem is necessary because without a fixed address or working phone, coordinating hospital discharge is very challenging as follow ups are nearly impossible to achieve. Therefore, if the significantly higher rates of hospital re-admissions of homelessness and the healthcare spending therein is considered, funds allocated to reducing homelessness will serve as a long-term investment, which could pay off for Connecticut taxpayers.

**Jeff Shaw, Senior Public Policy Advisor, The Alliance**: Supports this bill stating that while the increased funding for the homeless response system is a necessary measure, it is requested that funding also be increased for community nonprofits by 5% as since 2007 nonprofit providers are still 32% behind the growth of inflation. Funding for cold weather services will also not last beyond one fiscal year and in 2025 there will be a \$4.5 million dollar cut compared with current funding.

**John Souza, President, Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners (CCOPO)**: Supports this bill.

**Lauren Tagliatela, Chief Community Officer, Connecticut Apartment Association (CTAA)**: Supports this bill.

[\*\*Louis Tagliatela, Jr., Member, Connecticut Apartment Association \(CTAA\)\*\*](#): Supports this bill.

[\*\*Stephen Tagliatela, Manager, Saybrook Point Resort and Marina\*\*](#): Supports this bill.

[\*\*Arthur Taylor, Unhoused Leader, Unhoused Activist Community Team \(U-ACT\)\*\*](#): Supports this bill stating that it is known from personal experience being homeless that several resource centers do not actually assist people in getting permanent housing, they simply have knowledge of places that are accepting applications, with no direct contact or interaction with those agencies, and no advocacy.

[\*\*Roosevelt Watkins, Unhoused Leader, Unhoused Activist Community Team \(U-ACT\)\*\*](#): Supports this bill stating that the appropriated funds are a good start, but for those funds to be used effectively, there should be those who have experienced homelessness in the interagency council on homelessness.

The following two written testimonies support this bill stating that additional funding for dealing with the problem is homelessness is essential to promote equity in the state, especially because rates of homelessness are especially high for those who were formerly incarcerated and being unhoused heightens the risk of reoffending:

- [\*\*Manuel Sandoval, Smart Justice Leader, ACLU-CT\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU-CT\*\*](#)

The following written testimonies support this bill stating that additional funding is needed by the homeless response system because there has been an unprecedented 14% increase year-over-year in homelessness since 2021 and in 2023 Connecticut's homeless response system, despite its national ranking for effectiveness, found itself overwhelmed. In order to combat and reverse these trends it is suggested that funds are allocated in the following ways: \$5 million for Cold Weather Emergency Response, \$7.4 million to strengthen shelter and outreach, \$3.6 million to sustain diversion and coordinated access network hubs, \$2 million to support and expand the work of coordinated access network backbone organizations, and \$2 million for the flexible funding subsidy pool:

- [\*\*Isabel Almeida, President & CEO, United Way of Western Connecticut\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Melanie Alvarez, Director of Programs, Friendship Service Center\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Thomas Burr, Public Policy and Affiliates Relations Manager, National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI Connecticut\)\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Kara Capone, CEO, Community Housing Advocates\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Stacey Volentie Cote, Deputy Director, Center for Children's Advocacy\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Deirdre H. DiCara, Executive Director, Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern Connecticut \(FISH\)\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Wendy Epstein, Director of Supportive Housing, Homes with Hope\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Sarah Fox, CEO, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness \(CCEH\)\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Jim MacGillavry, Resident, Town of Winsted\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Margaret Middleton, CEO, Columbus House\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Matthew Morgan, Executive Director, Journey Home\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Jennifer Paradis, Executive Director, Beth-El Center\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Sarah Pavone, Director of Strategy, Journey Home\*\*](#)

- [Jim Pettinelli, Executive Director, Liberty Community Services](#)
- [Adam Pitts, Case Manager, Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern Connecticut \(FISH\)](#)
- [Daniel Santoroso, Executive Assistant, Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern Connecticut \(FISH\)](#)
- [Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving](#)
- [Katherine Whitney, Community Impact Program Manager, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness \(CCEH\)](#)

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Anonymous](#): Opposes this bill.

Reported by: George Vatis

Date: 3/27/2024