

# 2007 Legislative Guide

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**NCCEH**

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North Carolina Coalition  
to End Homelessness



# NCCEH

North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness  
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The North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness is a statewide membership nonprofit created to secure resources, encourage public dialogue, and advocate for public policy change to end homelessness.

NCCEH seeks to create alliances dedicated to changing the current system to end homelessness by addressing root causes and challenging North Carolina's acceptance of today's pervasive homelessness. Because we know this pervasive homelessness has not always existed, we know we can end it.

NCCEH's policy agenda is focused on bringing about an end to homelessness through prevention, increased access to and flexible funding for services, affordable housing production, increased funding for housing and homelessness programs, and targeting policies that exacerbate poverty. In order for plans to end homelessness to be successful, we must address the need for affordable housing, provision of supportive services, and adequate wages & income supports.

Our new logo was designed in support of the various needs for housing all North Carolinians, in community together. Although we may live in a range of housing, from single family homes to a single room, each of these housing types serves a vital role in our stability. They are our homes. We recognize the varied needs amongst our citizens and work to achieve this balance. In order to achieve an end to homelessness, a range of opportunities from permanent supportive housing to homeownership is needed.

Our new look, including our soon to be new website design, was thoughtfully donated by the artists of Anoroc Agency of Raleigh. [www.anorocagency.com](http://www.anorocagency.com)

We believe that in order to truly realize an end to homelessness, we must use our voices to advocate at all levels. If we, the people experiencing homelessness and the people working to end homelessness everyday, don't educate our elected officials on this issues, who will? NCCEH is here to offer you assistance in finding your voice. When we work as a team, advocacy doesn't have to take much time. You can rely on us to stay up-to-date on legislation and to alert you when your voice can help us make a difference. We're here to help you figure out the system, what works and what doesn't. If you want— we'll even give you talking points on what to say! Please join us in our advocacy activities. Don't let your knowledge, ideas and passion for change go unused— USE YOUR VOICE!

In our advocacy efforts, as in all of our work, we focus on building relationships. We appreciate your support and look forward to working with you in strengthening our relationships with elected officials. Much needed change will result as we work together to implement improved policies and funding priorities within the state and federal governments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Neunaber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Denise Neunaber, executive director**

The following is intended to be a guide on state and federal legislation that is needed in order to end homelessness in North Carolina. This list is by no means complete, but attempts to capture the legislation that is currently up for debate and upon which advocates can directly impact this year.

Information in this packet was gathered from many sources, including:

The National Alliance to End Homelessness	<a href="http://www.endhomelessness.org">www.endhomelessness.org</a>
The Corporation for Supportive Housing	<a href="http://www.csh.org">www.csh.org</a>
North Carolina Housing Coalition	<a href="http://www.nchousing.org">www.nchousing.org</a>
NC Justice Center	<a href="http://www.ncjustice.org">www.ncjustice.org</a>
National Low Income Housing Coalition	<a href="http://www.nlihc.org">www.nlihc.org</a>
NC Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on MH/DD/SAS	<a href="http://www.ncleg.net">www.ncleg.net</a>

# North Carolina Housing Trust Fund

The North Carolina Housing Trust Fund is administered by the NC Housing Finance Agency, with none of the funds going toward operating costs.

The Trust Fund was created by the General Assembly in 1987 using \$19.8 million from a legal settlement the state received due to oil company overcharges. It is funded through annual appropriations.

The Trust Fund is the state's most flexible housing resource, financing home ownership and rental apartments, new construction, rehab, and emergency repairs. It provides the state's largest source of funds to finance supportive housing and emergency repairs/accessibility modifications.

A separate board, the North Carolina Housing Partnership, sets policy for the Trust Fund. The Partnership Board consists of 13 members, including the Agency's executive director, the secretary of the Department of Commerce, and the state treasurer. The General Assembly appoints the other 10 members, who represent low-income housing advocates, homebuilders, the League of Municipalities, nonprofit housing development corporations, residents of low-income housing, and the real estate lending industry.

North Carolina's Housing Trust Fund currently funds:

- Development of supportive housing for homeless persons, individuals with physical and/or behavioral disabilities, survivors of domestic violence and others;
- Urgent repairs for very low-income homeowners;
- Homeownership for low-income families;
- Rental housing development for families and the elderly.

Last year, lawmakers found a way to appropriate \$17.1 million in recurring and one-time moneys to the Trust Fund - with approximately 60% of the funds earmarked for housing for persons with disabilities (through the Housing 400 Initiative). It was a record appropriation and well in excess of what the Governor had proposed, but far short of the huge funds established in states like Florida (\$200M), Washington (\$80M) and Ohio (\$50M). This year, Easley has again proposed an inadequate appropriation of only \$5 million.

The Campaign for Housing Carolina is a collaborative effort led by the NC Housing Coalition, NC Justice Center, United Way of NC, NC Coalition to End Homelessness, A.J. Fletcher Foundation, and the NC Association of Community Development Corporations. Along with other organizations, we are requesting an annual appropriation of \$50 million for the NC Housing Trust Fund.

\$50 million annually for the NC Housing Trust Fund will:

- House over 6,000 households each year.
- Generate over 3,000 jobs each year.
- Increase state and local tax revenues by over \$30 million each year.
- Leverage a total of \$200 million of housing development and preservation.

Bills calling for the \$50 million appropriation have been introduced in both the NC House and Senate this year. The appropriation is generally supported, however, amongst many needed programs, there is work to be done to convince the legislature to make the NC Housing Trust Fund a top priority.

## What Advocates Can Do:

- Contact your state representatives and senators:
  - Ask them to support the \$50 million appropriation for the NC Housing Trust Fund (if they are already a co-sponsor, THANK them)
  - Share stories of success and your community's need. Describe how more money for affordable housing could impact your community
  - Invite elected officials to meet with you in the district
  - Take elected officials on a tour of homeless programs and affordable housing to view your community's needs and possible solutions.
- Sign up as a supporter of the Campaign for Housing Carolina.
- Stay up to date with information from the campaign's website. [www.nchousing.org/advocacy/campaign](http://www.nchousing.org/advocacy/campaign)

# NC Mental Health Transformation

In 2001, the General Assembly adopted reform legislation to restructure the delivery of services to individuals with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse disorders. The foundations of reform included: local management of the system, decreased reliance on State institutions, community-based best practice treatments, increased consumer involvement, access to multiple and qualified providers, and performance and fiscal accountability to the State and local governments.

For persons experiencing homelessness in need of mental health or substance abuse services across the state, two major problems now occur:

- Access to adequate services
- Discharge from state institutions without the proper community support and follow-up

Just as state hospitals began policies to decrease the dependence on them as institutions, communities lost their capacity to serve consumers. Services once provided by the area mental health were divested and private providers were enrolled to provide these services. Homeless service providers have reported an increase in clients getting dropped off at shelters upon discharge from a state hospital. Often, these clients come without communication with the LME or community providers. There are many reported cases of difficulty refilling prescriptions or accessing appointments with appropriate providers.

North Carolina lacks appropriate housing options, such as permanent supportive housing. To begin to address this need, the legislature created the Housing 400 initiative. A joint project of the NC Dept. of Health and Human Services and the NC Housing Finance Agency, the initiative pairs funds for rehabilitation or construction of housing, rental subsidies and supportive services. The recipients of this first year of funding are expected to be announced in May.

Due to budget constraints, Local Management Entities (LME) were not given the funding needed to comply with reform and build community capacity before divesting of services. Many consumers experienced a rough transition while LMEs worked to find local providers able to meet consumers' needs. LMEs were forced to run two parallel systems with funding previously allocated for the one-shop area mental health. Significant problems also existed with the authority and clarification of role of the LME.

While consumers gained the choice of which provider to see, providers have also been allowed to choose what consumers to serve. Many consumers who are homeless are in need of special services and for many reasons, can prove difficult for providers to serve. Often, a provider must have adequate knowledge and provision of outreach services in order to physically find and meet the consumer. Many of the homeless have found it a difficult and confusing system to navigate, also struggling with transportation to some providers.

When a consumer is screened for services, the amount of services initially authorized varies greatly depending on whether he has Medicaid or not. Consumers without Medicaid are state funded. Each LME is given funding to serve these clients. However, the need is much greater than allotted funding. This forces the LME to cut the pie into smaller and smaller pieces.

Because of this, many homeless consumers are authorized to receive fewer services. This makes it difficult for providers to meet the consumer's needs and can be unprofitable when accounting the non-billable hours required to process the consumer's paperwork.

Changes need to be made at the state and local levels in order to better meet the needs of North Carolina's homeless. Focusing on the state level, the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services submitted several proposals last year to begin address these problems. Three new proposals were also submitted to the 2007 NC legislature:

## **Legislative Oversight Committee Proposal #1: Build Community Infrastructure - MH/DD/SA**

- This bill would appropriate one hundred thirty-five million, forty-two thousand, forty-eight dollars (\$135,042,048) for Fiscal Year 2007-08 and one hundred thirty-four million, seven hundred seventy-seven thousand, six hundred forty-seven dollars (\$134,777,647) for Fiscal Year 2008-09 to build community infrastructure for mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services. All funds distributed to LMEs are to be allocated by DHHS as a percentage of the total allocation that is equal to the LME's Percentage.

- Increased funding for Substance Abuse Treatment
- Independent- and Supportive-Living Apartments Initiative:
  - \$5,250,000 FY 2007-08 and FY 2008-09 to DHHS for additional operating cost subsidies for an estimated 1,000 independent- and supportive-living apartments for individuals with MH/DD/SA disabilities.
  - Directs DHHS to maximize the number of subsidies that it can pay for with these funds by first giving priority to NCHFA-financed apartments, giving second priority to other publicly subsidized apartments, and finally individuals with incomes at or below the SSI level. Up to \$250,000 can be used for administration of the subsidies.
  - \$10,000,000 FY 2007-08 and FY 2008-09 to the North Carolina Housing Trust Fund of the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) to finance independent- and supportive-living apartments for individuals with MH/DD/SA disabilities. These funds can be used to continue the current Housing 400 Initiative as currently operated.
  - Requires DHHS and NCHFA to work together to plan the most efficient and effective use of state resources in the financing and construction of additional independent- and supportive-living apartments for individuals with MH/DD/SA disabilities.
- Increased funding to expand Crisis and Acute Care Services
- Pilot program to increase community resources for persons with mental illness and to reduce acute admissions to State psychiatric hospitals
- Assistance to Law Enforcement
- Additional funding for LME administration and to fill services gaps

#### **Legislative Proposal # 2: Uniform Sliding Fees - MH/DD/SA Services**

- This bill would:
  1. Direct the Secretary to adopt rules to set a uniform sliding fee schedule. The fee schedule shall apply to all services paid for with either State or local funds. Private providers will be required to utilize the schedule. Amend G.S. 122C-146 accordingly.
  2. Direct DHHS to identify all services

#### **Extend Pilot/Clarify LME Functions - MH/DD/SA**

- This bill would:
  1. First Commitment Pilot Program - Reauthorizes the pilot program and adds five additional LMEs.
  2. Clarify Screening /Triage/Referral Rolls - Amends G.S. 122C-115.4(b) to clarify that only LMEs are authorized to conduct the core LME functions.
  3. LME Size Requirements - Amends G.S. 122C-115(a1) to allow that an LME that does not comply with the catchment area requirements because of a change in county membership has 12 months from the effective date of the change to comply with LME size requirements.

The proposals that include funding allocations will go through the appropriations committee. The House Committee on Mental Health Reform and the Senate Committee on Mental Health and Youth Services will review the proposals regarding a change in regulation.

It is unclear what direction the committees will take. While the majority of these proposals are generally supported, how they will fare in midst of the Senate and House leadership reducing spending caps will be dependent upon how well advocates are able to convince legislators to make these proposals a priority.

#### **What Advocates Can Do:**

- Contact your legislators and request that they support additional funding for building community capacity and the Housing 400 Initiative
- Share stories of how homeless in your community are able/unable to access services. What type of services are available/unavailable?
- Share any state hospital discharges into your homeless system. What kind of supports are available to you?
- Invite legislators to meet with you and consumers in the district
- Meet with your LME to determine how you can work together to better meet the needs of the homeless seeking mental health care or substance abuse services
- Work with NCCEH throughout the year to learn more about what can be done to change the state level policy as well as coping strategies for the field.

## FEDERAL REQUESTS

Throughout the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, NCCEH will be working with congressional members and staff on the following program and funding requests. These programs support or communities in the creation of, and access to, affordable housing and services. These policy changes and funding requests are essential to ending homelessness.

### FY08 Budget Requests

#### HUD Appropriations

- Fully fund current Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers plus an additional 100,000 vouchers.
- Support an increase for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants.
- Support \$4.7 billion in public housing operating and \$3.5 billion in public housing capital funding including at least \$38 million for Resident Opportunities and Supportive Services (ROSS), in FY08.
- Oppose the President's request to cut Section 202 elderly housing by 22% and Section 811 disabled persons housing from \$237 million to \$125 million.
- Support at least the President's increases for HOME, homeless assistance grants and HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS).
- Support adequate funding for HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research.

#### HHS Appropriations

- Support an additional \$80 million for the Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals (GBHI) program targeted to services in permanent supportive housing

#### USDA Appropriations

- Support \$100 million for Section 515 USDA Funding

### Program and Targeting Requests

#### McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs

- Support reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Act in order to codify the continuum of care process, offer incentives for communities to provide permanent supportive housing, and create program options that will be practical for our rural communities.

#### Services to End Long Term Homelessness

- Support the enactment of SELHA to provide the service component of permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals and families.

#### National Housing Trust Fund

- Enact a National Housing Trust Fund bill in the 110th Congress.
- Provide a dedicated source of funds for new rental housing production.
- Target trust fund dollars to housing that is affordable for extremely low income households, families with incomes below 30% of area medium.

## Section Eight Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA)

- Include a voucher funding formula that provides a permanent solution to the flawed voucher funding system in place since 2004.
- Support full funding of currently authorized voucher and 100,000 new vouchers in FY08.
- Support simplified rent rules like only recertifying incomes of families on fixed incomes every three years.
- Allow greater use of vouchers in manufactured homes.
- Make it easier for agencies to finance portability so that families can exercise their right to move with a voucher.

## Rural Housing - USDA 515

- Support rural housing legislation that will allow for the revitalization of the Rural Housing Service Section 515 multifamily housing stock and preserve these existing properties for low income families.
- Ensure that tenants are protected during any revitalization and preservation process where an existing loan is prepaid.

## Public Housing

- Adequately fund public housing operating and capital funds.
- Oppose any attempts to extend or expand the *Moving to Work* program without evaluation and tenant protections.
- Oppose any attempts to weaken public housing authority (PHA) planning requirements.
- Only support *HOPE VI* reauthorization if the program results in no net loss of housing to the local community and protects residents' right to return.
- Support efforts to repeal the public housing community service requirement.

## Community Development Block Grant Program

- Ensure that activities funded by CDBG directly meet the needs of extremely low and very low income households.
- We recommend that 100% of CDBG funds benefit households with incomes at or less than 80% of their area median and at least 40% benefit households under 50% of area median income.

## Second Chance Act

- Support the Second Chance Act, which, among other things, would allow housing programs to be an eligible use of state or local reentry grants from the Department of Justice to assist ex-offenders return to their communities.

More detailed information on our priorities are available on the following pages.  
For additional information and updates, visit the following websites:

North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness, [www.ncceh.org](http://www.ncceh.org)  
North Carolina Housing Coalition, [www.nchousing.org](http://www.nchousing.org)  
National Alliance to End Homelessness, [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)  
National Low Income Housing Coalition, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org)

# HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act was enacted by congress in 1987. Renamed the McKinney-Vento Act in 2000, the Act authorizes funds for a set of federal homeless assistance programs, including four administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These grants are the primary source of funding for local efforts in addressing homelessness.

HUD's homeless assistance programs are broken down into two main areas: formula (non-competitive) and competitive.

This year, North Carolina received \$18,590,768.00 in Homeless Assistance Grants, the largest award to date.

Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) programs funds are granted on a formula basis to states and communities. These funds can be used for emergency shelters for people experiencing homelessness and for homelessness prevention.

North Carolina receives ESG funds for its statewide non-entitlement program as well as the five entitlements: Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh and Winston-Salem. For 2007, North Carolina received a total ESG allocation of \$3,087,381.00.

The competitive programs are awarded through Continuum of Care(CoC) systems. These programs are Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for Single Room Occupancy Dwellings for Homeless Individuals (SRO); Shelter Plus Care (S+C); and the Supportive Housing Program (SHP). Under the Continuum of Care process, homelessness providers, advocates, government officials and other interested parties in a geographic area work together to identify their needs and prioritize projects for funding. CoC funding can be used for permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and services.

In the 2006 competition, North Carolina received:

- \$3,005,380.00 in new SHP awards
- \$6,757,255.00 in renewal SHP funding
- \$2,482,740.00 in new S+C awards
- \$3,258,012.00 in S+C renewal funding

The Administration's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request calls for \$1.586 billion for HUD homeless assistance funding, an increase of \$144 million from 2007. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that the request would be sufficient to continue existing homeless activities, yet it would fund fewer than 8,000 new units of permanent supportive housing.

Two recent policy changes to the homeless assistance programs have enabled these programs to be used more effectively to end homelessness:

- In 1999, Congress adopted a 30% set aside for permanent supportive housing for individuals and families with disabilities. In order to retain funding for currently funded programs, continuums must place an emphasis on permanent supportive housing.
- In 2001, Congress provided automatic funding for renewals of S+C. This ensures funding for these housing programs while funding them out of a separate pot of money, not the continuum's competitive pro rate share.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is spearheading an initiative to help end homelessness for the roughly 600,000 families who are homeless across the country each year. Communities are implementing rapid rehousing programs, which cost-effectively move homeless families into private market permanent housing. Congress can assist communities by providing an incentive within HUD's homeless assistance grants for these rapid rehousing programs. The incentive should support programs that do the following:

- Focus on helping homeless families move in permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- Provide flexible short-term housing assistance as needed.
- Provide follow up supports to ensure stability and prevent a future occurrence of homelessness.

## **Appropriations Request**

An Appropriation of \$1.8 billion would:

- Fund all expiring permanent housing renewals, which by themselves will increase by \$65 million between 2007 and 2008.
- Provide \$25 million to communities to set up cost-effective programs to help homeless families move into permanent housing.
- Fund 15,000 new units of permanent supportive housing, helping put communities on track to create the 150,000 units needed to end chronic homelessness.

## **McKinney-Vento Act Reauthorization**

Since McKinney was signed into law in 1987, we've learned a lot about homelessness and more about what strategies are effective in ending homelessness. There are several practices that we now accept as pieces of McKinney that have not been written into the federal statute. One aspect of McKinney reauthorization is to codify current practices (such as the continuum of care) into the statute. Through reauthorization, lawmakers are also hoping to encourage practices and programs that have proven results in ending homelessness.

In the last congress, there were several bills attempting to address McKinney-Vento reauthorization.

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) introduced the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act. It would have:

- Consolidated HUD's three competitive homeless programs into one competitive program
- Added prevention as an eligible activity
- HUD would have shifted some of the responsibility of overseeing grantees to Collaborative Applicants, which would have been similar to existing Continuum of Care.
- Continued the emphasis on permanent housing and chronic homelessness with some modifications
- Funded all permanent housing renewals non-competitively
- Required HUD to provide a bonus to create new permanent housing through construction or acquisition and rehabilitation for chronically homeless individuals and families as well as non-disabled families

Another bill, HUD's proposal, contained language that would "basically take every thing that HUD is responsible for and give it to the communities". This idea is not popular with the committee that has to authorize the bill. Popular thought is now the allowance for individual communities to decide what their continuum of care should be and whether a non-profit or local government entity should be the lead.

This year, we can expect to see more bills attempting to address reauthorization. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act has been introduced by Congresswoman Julia Carson (D-IN). This bill is based off of the Bringing America Home Act.

This spring, Reed plans to introduce a bill similar to his 2006 bill, S 1801. This will be what is expected to move forward. It is likely that this will be the main bill that the committee works from. Amendments, including some of the proposals but forth in other bills, may be made. The Senate Banking Committee and the House Financial Services Committee will be responsible for seeing any McKinney reauthorization proposals through to passage.

It is likely that we will see real movement on reauthorization this year. In order to address the needs of NC, it is vital that advocates work to inform our elected officials on the essential elements of reauthorization.

## **What Advocates Can Do**

- Contact your representative and Senators Burr and Dole—ask them to support \$1.8 billion for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants
- Get up-to-date information on the McKinney appropriations campaign from our website.
- Participate in NCCEH's Tuesdays at Two conference call on McKinney Reauthorization on May 1, 2007 at 2PM. This will be a chance to learn more about the current direction of the reauthorization and to offer your feedback to National Alliance to End Homelessness Policy Staff. See our website's calendar for participation information.
- When legislation is introduced, be sure to contact your congresspersons to share with them what a good reauthorization would be for your community.

# Services to End Long-term Homelessness Act

North Carolina's Senator Burr reintroduced the Services for Ending Long-term Homelessness Act (SELHA) in February. This bill would authorize funding for services in permanent supportive housing targeted to individuals and families who experience long-term homelessness. Obtaining the funding to create and provide ongoing services is often the most difficult piece of operating permanent supportive housing.

In 2003, the U.S. Department of HHS studied mainstream programs and their ability to serve chronically homeless populations. The report found that no mainstream program is comprehensive enough to adequately serve the chronically homeless.

Under the program established by SELHA, services would include mental health services, substance abuse treatment, referrals for primary health and dental care, case management and others. Grants would be renewable and could work in conjunction with Section 8, McKinney, and other housing programs. These services are essential for some individuals and families to successfully retain housing.

## Key Provisions:

- Establishes a grant program run by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) for services to end chronic homelessness.
- Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual with a disabling condition or family headed by a person with a disabling condition who is currently homeless and has either been homeless continuously for at least one year or has been homeless on at least four separate occasions in the last three years.
- States, cities, public or non-profit entities can apply for the grants
- Consideration will be provided for geographic diversity, including urban and rural areas.
- Priority will be given to applicants that target funds to people that are homeless for longer than one year, frequently use the ER, or interact regularly with law enforcement.
- The initial grants will run from 3 to 5 years and the renewal grants will run for up to five years.

In the Senate, SELHA is expected to be considered along with reauthorization for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), which could be taken up as early as May this year. Senator Burr has been a champion of this bill since 2004 and continues to lead the push for funding. Senator Dole is a supportive cosponsor as well. The bill has yet to be introduced in the house. Previous cosponsors of the bill in the house were: David Price, Sue Myrick and Bob Etheridge.

NCCEH is working with the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Corporation for Supportive Housing and advocates across the country. While we are working to enact SELHA, we are also working on securing an appropriation to make funds for services available as soon as possible. **The campaign to secure \$80 million for services for permanent supportive housing is underway for FY08.**

Rep. Price supported the request in his funding priorities letter to the committee, along with several other house members from across the country. The funding priority letters for the Senate will be turned in later in April. We are asking that Senators Burr and Dole make this one of their funding priorities.

If we receive an appropriation for supportive services for permanent supportive housing, funding would be available as early as next year. Within the past few weeks, SAMSHA issued a notice of funding availability for services for permanent supportive housing. Up to eight grants will be awarded up to \$375,000 annually for five years. This is the first announcement of this type of funding and is being administered according to the language outlined in SELHA. While funding eight programs throughout the country will not meet this pressing need, it is a hopeful sign for more action to come.

## What Advocates Can Do:

- Contact Senators Burr and Dole and ask for them to make \$80 million for services for permanent supportive housing a funding priority
- Contact your representative and ask them to become a cosponsor of SELHA
- Contact your representative and Senators Burr and Dole asking for a quick passage of SELHA.
- Share stories of community success and need. How would this services funding impact your ability to create and maintain permanent supportive housing?

Key Targets: Senator Burr (Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee), Representative Myrick (Health subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce committee) and Representative Price (Appropriations Committee)

## Services to Prevent Veterans Homelessness Act of 2007

In March, Senator reintroduced his Services to Prevent Homelessness Act, S. 874. Burr's legislation provides supportive services to keep low-income veterans in permanent housing so they do not become homeless. It will increase veterans' access to assistance for housing, physical and mental health services, health insurance, and vocational and financial counseling. If enacted, the program would allow the VA to provide per diem payments to nonprofits, to pay for supportive services to low-income veterans living in permanent housing, with an emphasis on veterans who were recently homeless.

Burr serves on the Veterans Affairs Committee in the U.S. Senate. He introduced his Services to Prevent Veterans Homelessness legislation in November 2005 and in June 2006 the legislation was passed by the Senate as part of the Veterans Choice of Representation and Benefits Enhancement Act of 2006 but was not included in the final legislation negotiated with the House of Representatives.

### What Advocates Can Do:

- Contact Senator Burr and thank him for his leadership
- Provide local information to support Burr's request
- Contact Senator Dole and ask her to become a cosponsor of the bill

## National Housing Trust Fund and Affordable Housing Fund

A National Housing Trust Fund would:

- Provide a dedicated revenue source to produce, preserve and rehabilitate 1.5 million homes affordable to low income people over the next 10 years.
- Ensure that this new housing resource is targeted for the very lowest income people.
- Include safeguards to guarantee that rural areas receive their fair share of housing funds.
- Allow up to 25% of National Housing Trust Fund dollars to go toward homeownership.

Efforts to create a National Housing Trust Fund are underway again this year. The National Housing Trust Fund Campaign is led by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. More than 5,600 national, state and local organizations, religious leaders and state and local elected officials from around the country are endorsers of the campaign.

Last year, a proposal to modify the way Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are regulated. The house approved a bill that included a provision that would have taken 5% of Fannie and Freddie's profits and put them into a fund to develop affordable rental housing and assist homeowners. Ultimately, the bill was help up by the Senate.

A bill to create the Affordable Housing Fund has been reintroduced this year. The House Financial Services Committee approved the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2007 (H.R. 1427) by a vote of 45 to 19 on March 29, 2007. The legislation, which will now be taken up by the full House, will overhaul the regulatory oversight of government sponsored enterprises (GSEs) Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Federal Home Loan Banks and create an independent regulator. Importantly, the bill provides for an affordable housing fund which would dedicate approximately \$500 million a year (funds from the first year would be directed to the Gulf Coast) to the construction, maintenance, and preservation of affordable housing. During the markup, Financial Services Chairman Barney Frank (D-MA) offered an amendment, which passed with a strong majority, which will lay the groundwork for using these funds to create a National Housing Trust Fund.

### What Advocates Can Do:

- Visit [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org) for more information on the particulars of each fund
- Sign on as an endorser of the National Housing Trust Fund
- Contact your members of Congress and express your support of the creation of an Affordable Housing Fund and a National Housing Trust Fund

\*Key legislators: Senator Dole sits on the Senate Banking Committee and Representative Mel Watt sits on the House Finance Committee.

## Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

On March 29, Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA), chair of the House Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee, introduced H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). This bill is based on H.R. 5443 that was introduced in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress and includes a number of changes that would simplify the Section 8 housing choice voucher program.

Several changes that advocates requested were included in the new measure, including a new funding formula that would provide a comprehensive solution to the ups and downs that communities have experienced since 2004 when HUD put the "snapshot" formula into place. The new bill also includes a provision that would improve the portability of Section 8 vouchers by mandating that an agency must absorb a family and providing a priority for additional funds to cover the costs. The change would simplify the current complex billing process and assure tenants the ability to use their voucher to move to a community of their choice.

### What Advocates Can Do:

- Contact your representative and Senator Burr and Dole, requesting their support for the new funding formula for Section 8.
- Learn more about the bill from the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Website: [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org)
- Communicate the need to keep the existing rule that requires targeting 75% of vouchers to extremely low income families
- Request that your congresspersons support full funding for current Section 8 vouchers, plus an additional 100,000 new vouchers.

## The Second Chance Act

The Second Chance Act focuses on the reentry of people from jails and prisons. The bill nearly passed in the last days of the last Congress, but was help up by one Senator.

The bill would reauthorize and revise an existing grant program within the Department of Justice, providing money to states for reentry programs, creating a federal interagency task force to study and coordinate policy, commissioning a number of research projects including a study of federal housing policy barriers to successful reentry, and authorizing grants from the Justice Department directly to nonprofits for reentry programs.

Each year, nearly 650,000 people are released from U.S. prisons, and over seven million are released from jails. People exiting prisons or jails are at increased risk of homelessness. More than 10 percent of those coming in and out of prisons and jail are homeless in the months before their incarceration. Shelter use, both before incarceration and after release, is associated with an increased risk of return to prison. Many former prisoners need help accessing affordable housing and services to help them reenter their community.

Housing is a key part of any reentry strategy, and it is addressed in a number of ways in the Second Chance Act. Second Chance funding could be used for housing, employment training, and services such as strengthening the capacity of prisoner's families to provide stable housing situations.

The bill (H.R. 1593) has been reintroduced this year by Rep. Danny Davis (IL-D). North Carolina's Howard Coble is amongst the bill's cosponsors. The House Judiciary Committee, on March 28, 2007 passed the Second Chance Act and sent it to the full House. The same legislation was introduced in the Senate on March 29, 2007. The bill has widespread bipartisan support and is expected to pass this year.

## Advocacy Activities:

Join in these advocacy efforts with the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness. For more information on how to participate in these activities and how to plan for meetings and tours, visit [www.ncceh.org](http://www.ncceh.org)

- Letters and emails
- Phone calls
- Request a meeting in Raleigh or DC
- Request to meet while they are at home in the district
- Hold a legislative breakfast
- Bring elected officials on tours of your program and community's housing and services
- Media coverage

Effective advocacy depends on your ability to build and strengthen a relationship with elected official and their staff—that means ALL of these advocacy strategies should be used! Remember, you are the expert. Who better knows how state and federal policy and funding decision impact the homeless than you? You are working on the front line and can be the eyes and ears for your elected officials.

## Preparing to Meet with Your Elected Officials

Here are some suggestions for information you can provide:

- ***Latest Point in Time Count***
- ***Information on your agency*** AND other agencies in your area—who is on the continuum of care?
- ***Success stories***—what is WORKING? Do you have stories of clients that you can share? Or is there someone who has experienced/is experiencing homelessness who can tell their personal story? Highlight what services needed to be in place for that person to be successful.
- Focus on the idea that homelessness is ***a problem we can SOLVE***. Often, this is what makes it more intriguing to elected officials. We know there is a lot of need. Focus on the opportunity and excitement about this being a piece of the puzzle that they can truly impact.
- ***Background information:*** What do homeless services currently look like in your community? Is there Affordable Housing for your homeless clients to move into? Are mental health services accessible to the homeless? Are you seeing persons being discharged from Mental Health facilities coming to your shelter? What needs to be improved? Studies show that Permanent Supportive Housing is a real solution. Explain to legislators what this would look like—and why it works.
- ***Cost-benefit information:*** There are several studies that show that permanent supportive housing can actually save community dollars. Does your community have any local data you can share?
- What does ***your community need*** to end homelessness?  
Is it money for affordable housing/ permanent supportive housing? Increased access to services? Increased partnerships with Mental Health Hospitals? Employment training, etc? Ending homelessness is complex. How do your needs fit in with what we can ask of the State Legislature (re: Housing Trust Fund and Mental Health)
- ***Ten-year planning communities:***
  - If your plan is completed, give them a copy!
  - All communities can give an update of your progress on the plan.
    - What kinds of things are you including?  
Increasing affordable housing? Creating new permanent supportive housing?
    - Who is on the planning committee? (Be sure to emphasize what a broad coalition and community interest there is. Highlight business owners, faith communities, etc.)
  - Highlight any progress you have been able to make