



NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Improving Health, Preventing Disease, Reducing Costs for All

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June 25, 2020

The Honorable Chris Sununu
Governor
State of New Hampshire
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Recovery Housing Relief

CC: Executive Director Jerry Little
GOFERR Legislative Advisory Board
GOFERR Stakeholder Advisory Board

Dear Governor Sununu:

The New Hampshire COVID-19 Equity Task Force is a collective of over 50 individuals and organizations across NH representing multiple sectors and communities that has come together to address issues of equity arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and response. A subgroup of the Task Force is working on issues relative to substance use disorders and mental health and have identified concerns relative to recovery housing.

The below signatories, comprising of task force members and other concerned parties, appreciate the opportunity to offer the following recommendation for the N.H. Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) as it develops spending priorities for the federal funding coming to the state through the CARES Act, and as you develop priorities for other funding the state has or may receive. We submit this comment as providers working with individuals with substance use disorders, advocacy organizations, public health organizations, and other individuals and stakeholders who have an interest in New Hampshire's substance use disorder recovery community maintaining its stability as our state deals with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recovery housing facilities across our state – a critical resource in our fight against the ongoing addiction epidemic – have been devastated amid the COVID-19 pandemic and are at serious risk of closing. According to the N.H. Coalition of Recovery Residences (NH CORR), upwards of 50 percent of residents in recovery houses have lost their income and have fallen behind on an average of \$700 in rental payments. Six housing facilities have closed due to the loss of this rental income, and many others are at risk of closure, which would further exacerbate the state's housing shortages and could sacrifice the gains made against the addiction crisis. Recovery houses are struggling to maintain social distancing and are not filling all their rooms due to the pandemic.

In response to these income losses, NH CORR reports it has provided financial support totaling about \$38,000 to nearly 80 individuals in need.

- This assistance has covered less than half the requests for assistance that have come in – about 180 requests have come in, totaling more than \$90,000 in total, and more are coming in each day, according to CORR.

2018 Affiliate of the Year of the American Public Health Association

- CORR estimates that another \$250,000 – 500,000 is needed in the rental assistance program, to assist individuals through the end of the next fiscal year. Additionally, \$825,000 – 1, 2000,000 is needed to build additional capacity for individuals needing recovery housing.
- The funding to build capacity could be provided as a zero interest loan that could be turned into a grant if the home were either certified through NH CORR or registered with the state. The money could be used to build extra bathrooms or to convert new homes into recovery housing.
- NH CORR expects that once people are no longer in fear of going to health care settings that there will be a surge of individuals entering into treatment and then recovery.
- Funding for individual rent subsidies and to expand capacity could play a critical role helping secure stable housing for these individuals looking to achieve and maintain long-term recovery from substance use disorders.
- This would go far to protect the gains New Hampshire has made against the addiction epidemic, and to support these critical housing resources now and into the future.
- These funds could be filtered through NH CORR or any other department, agency, or entity that the state saw fit to do this task.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide the above comment, and hope that using the CARES Act and other funding for rent subsidies and expanded capacity be given serious consideration.

Respectfully,

Joan H. Ascheim, MSN, Executive Director, New Hampshire Public Health Association

New Futures

Mary Drew, Reality Check

Dan Wargo, BS, LADC, Program Manager at The Center For Recovery Resources

Michelle Lennon, Greater Tilton Area Family Resource Center

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The Kent Street Coalition

Hope for NH Recovery