



NC COALITION^{to} end HOMELESSNESS

[Month, dd, 20xx]

[North Carolina Congressional Member] United States Congress
Washington DC 20024

Dear [NC Members of the Senate and U.S. House of Representatives]:

We are writing to offer our experience in the implementation of Housing First for HUD-funded programs in 79 of North Carolina's 100 counties. This information is designed to support your understanding of the Housing First requirement's pivotal role in effectively addressing homelessness in our state.

I. History of Bi-Partisan Support.

The goal of Housing First is to bring “. . . *vulnerable individuals and families to safe and stable housing as quickly as possible without creating unnecessary steps or barriers to housing and services, and without using housing as a reward for behavior modification.*”¹

- Housing First was initially promoted as a best practice during the George H. W. Bush Administration (1989-1993) through the leadership of then-HUD Secretary Jack Kemp.
- Historically the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has supported Housing First for its . . .

- higher housing retention rates;
- lower returns to homelessness; and
- significant reductions (and costs) in the use of crisis service and institutions (like emergency rooms and jails).

- In 2020, the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Subcommittees² responsible for allocating funds for HUD's homeless assistance programs signed a [letter](#) to Robert Marbut, former head of USICH, attesting to the evidence-based practices, reduction of homelessness, and access to services through localized Continuum of Care strategies.

II. The Data Confirms the Model Works.

The Housing First model is data-driven as Congress has required. Multiple studies have been conducted over the years, both inside and outside the state. For your convenience, we have highlighted some of that information in this letter. The Pathways to Housing program was one of the earliest versions of Housing First. Between 2000 and 2004, there were three major studies of the Pathways model in New York City. At the 24-month follow up, Pathway's participants spent almost no time experiencing homelessness, while participants in the city's residential treatment program spent about a quarter of their time experiencing homelessness on average. After five years, 88 percent of the program's tenants remained housed, compared to only 47 percent of the residents in the control group.³

In-state and more recently, the *Housing First Charlotte-Mecklenburg Research & Evaluation Project* (November 2020) documented housing placements for over 1000 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, nearly twice the initial goal. Based on a sample of 330 individuals from the chronic homelessness by-name list, about 70% of individuals remain in housing after a year. The majority of individuals housed moved into housing first permanent supportive housing, and over 80% of those individuals remain in housing.⁴

III. The Impact on Homelessness.

Between 2007 and 2017, homelessness decreased overall and across every major category of homelessness nationally. Overall homelessness decreased 14.4 percent. The most dramatic decreases in homelessness have been among veterans (34.3 percent), individuals experiencing chronic homelessness (27.4 percent), and people living in unsheltered locations (24.6 percent).⁵

IV. How can people diagnosed with mental illness or drug addiction expect to stay off the streets if services are not required as a condition of housing?

- Housing First provides services and recognizes that stable housing is a prerequisite for effective psychiatric and substance abuse treatment and for improving quality of life. Once stably housed, individuals are better able to take advantage of wrap-around services – to help support housing stability, employment, and recovery.
- When individuals were provided access to stable, affordable housing, with services under their control, 79% remained stably housed at the end of 6 months, compared to 27% in the control group.⁶

- Another long-term study found that participants in the Housing First model obtained housing earlier (and remained stably housed after 24 months) than participants in programs where housing and services were contingent on sobriety and progress in treatment.⁷

V. The Impact of Housing First on the community:

- In a case study conducted by Partners Ending Homelessness and the Phillips Foundation in Guilford County (NC), it was determined that best practices like the Housing First model better serve the chronically homeless while creating cost savings and efficiencies across the system. Between 2014-2017, chronic homelessness in Guilford County was reduced by 98 percent, and 140 acutely vulnerable households gained greater health and financial stability. The community reaped a related cost savings of nearly \$12 million to date.⁸
- Moore Place, a program of the Urban Ministry Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, housed 85 former chronically homeless adults in 2012 and was the first such facility in the Charlotte area to operate as a housing first model. Moore Place tenant income increased since entering the program an average of 76% from \$394 \$694 at Year 2, a statistically significant difference.⁹
- Studies show that Housing First reduces hospital visits, admissions, and duration of hospital stays among homeless individuals. Overall public system spending is reduced by nearly as much as what is spent on housing.¹⁰
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs that reduced veteran homelessness-- including unsheltered homelessness--by more than half specifically attribute this success to Housing First.

VI. Does Housing First take a one-size-fits-all approach?

- No, Housing First provides access to services through locally developed CoC strategies.

We appreciate your consideration of the Housing First approach and its value for our state.

Sincerely,

North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care (comprising 79 counties)

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Continuum of Care

¹ Excerpt from a letter by the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Subcommittees to newly appointed USICH Executive Director Robert Marbut in January 2020.

² Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Jack Reed (D-RI) and Representatives David Price (D-NC) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL).

³ <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Housing-First-Research.pdf>

⁴ <https://mecklenburghousingdata.org/housing-first-charlotte-mecklenburg/>

⁵ <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report-legacy/>

⁶

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8936976_Consumer_Preference_Programs_for_Individuals_Who_Are_Homeless_and_Have_Psychiatric_Disabilities_A_Drop-In_Center_and_a_Supported_Housing_Program

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8647240_Housing_First_Consumer_Choice_and_Harm_Reduction_for_Homeless_Individuals_With_a_Dual_Diagnosis

⁸ <http://phillipsfdtn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Phillips-Foundation-Case-Study-Partners-EndingHomelessness.pdf>

⁹ [Moore Place Permanent Supportive Housing Evaluation Study Final Report \(csh.org\)](#)

¹⁰ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/183666>

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