

For Immediate Release, March 15, 2024

**Vermont Legal Aid Files Lawsuit to  
Stop Termination of All-Weather “Adverse Weather Conditions”  
GA Emergency Housing Program**

Groundworks Collaborative, Inc., Another Way, Inc., End Homelessness Vermont of Peace and Justice Center, and Good Samaritan Haven v. Vermont Agency of Human Services, Jenney Samuelson, Secretary of the Agency of Human Services, Chris Winters, Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families; Vermont Superior Court, Chittenden Unit, Case No.

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Today, Vermont Legal Aid, Inc. has filed a lawsuit in the Vermont Superior Court, Chittenden Civil Division, on behalf of homeless service providers and their clients to stop the Agency of Human Services (AHS) from terminating the Emergency Housing Program benefits for hundreds of vulnerable Vermonters.

GA emergency housing has provided temporary, wintertime shelter in motels across Vermont for people experiencing homelessness. Two weeks ago, the Vermont legislature authorized continued assistance for some participants, including people with medical conditions or disabilities. The Legislature directed AHS to ensure that temporary housing be provided to eligible households, subject to availability of rooms.

Despite this mandate to determine eligibility, the Department has failed to reach the hundreds of people who may still be eligible under the new rules. Despite having the authority to do so, AHS refuses to extend the wintertime shelter program through April 15<sup>th</sup>. This extension would allow more time for the named plaintiffs and AHS to verify eligibility without unhousing hundreds of people—many of whom may be eligible for continuous shelter under the new rules. Terminating this program is expected to unhouse hundreds of households, many of whom likely include people with disabilities or health conditions.

The lawsuit seeks an immediate injunction from the Court to bar AHS from terminating benefits for residents of the motels on March 15<sup>th</sup> before determining everyone’s eligibility. The lawsuit targets the attempt of AHS to shift their burden of determining eligibility onto service providers like the plaintiffs—all of whom are now scrambling to reach hundreds of people in crisis.

“This emergency is entirely manufactured by AHS and the Department,” says Attorney Sandra Paritz, lead counsel for the plaintiffs. “They could pause the end of all-weather AWC and give our clients and themselves time to fix this. Instead, they are choosing not to. Vulnerable Vermonters will be gravely harmed.”

For more information, please go to <https://www.vtlegalaid.org/news>

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