

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ABOUT CATHEDRAL SQUARE

- ▶ Recognized as a national leader in the creation of high-quality, affordable and service-enriched housing for older Vermonters and people with disabilities and other special needs
- ▶ Creator and statewide administrator of the award-winning SASH® (Support and Services at Home) program, established in 2009
- ▶ Operates 25 housing communities, with 2 more under development
 - 2 devoted to assisted living/memory care
 - 4 operated in partnership with ANEW Place, Howard Center, Lund, and UVM Health Care Home Health & Hospice
- ▶ All designed to keep Vermonters safe and healthy and living at home, thereby contributing to vibrant and diverse communities

THE PEOPLE WE SERVE*

1,163 Residents

- 1,079 adults ages 55+
- 68 adults under age 55
- 16 children ages (under age 18)

Wait List: 928 households

92% of our resident households are very low income (earning < 50% AMI)

96% have rent subsidies or receive another type of rental discount

26% are handicapped or disabled

15.6% were homeless before coming to Cathedral Square

* December 2020 snapshot

1 Raise Vermont's Medicaid Reimbursement Rate

The Medicaid reimbursement rate — the amount Vermont pays to providers of Assisted Living and Residential Care for very low income Vermonters — is set by the state and stands at \$42.25 per person per day. This is well below the cost of caring for this population, which is why many private facilities refuse people on Medicaid. In contrast, because our mission at Cathedral Square is to care for people in this demographic, Medicaid recipients comprise 86% of the residents in our two licensed assisted-living communities. The low Medicaid reimbursement we receive not only fails to cover our costs, it makes it extremely difficult to recruit and retain staff. This is because we have to compete for high-quality staff with private facilities that can afford to pay sign-on bonuses and much higher wages. This issue reached crisis proportions last year and prompted us to consider closing both communities. **We strongly urge the Legislature to mandate a yearly cost-of-living adjustment to the Medicaid reimbursement rate** as provided through Vermont's Assistive Community Care Services (ACCS) program.

2 Boost Funding for Affordable Housing

The continuing need for high-quality, service-enriched and affordable housing has never been more critical. The pandemic has illuminated the vast inequities in this fundamental human need — shelter — and the critical role that housing plays in assuring health. Cathedral Square stands ready to address this urgent, statewide need. Vermont's nonprofit housing providers rely on revenue from the state Property Transfer Tax (PTT), as allocated by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), to build new and preserve existing affordable housing. VHCB funds not only address the critical need for housing and natural resource conservation in our state, they boost the economy through the creation of jobs and the purchase of goods, and new housing adds considerably to Vermont's grand lists. **We urge the Legislature to fund VHCB this year at its full statutory PTT share of \$22.7 million.**

3 Level-Fund SASH® Statewide Administration

SASH® (Support and Services at Home) is a Vermont-grown, award-winning and life-changing program that has served over 9,000 older Vermonters and Vermonters with disabilities since 2011. **It has been shown to improve participants' health and to reduce Medicare and Medicaid health care expenditures.** SASH has played a crucial role during the pandemic by providing consistent and frequent outreach, coaching, and care coordination to ensure participants' needs are met. OneCare Vermont funds the direct-service component of SASH, while the statewide administrative infrastructure (for training, data analysis, quality control, technical assistance, etc.) relies on funding from the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL). Funding of this administrative component is crucial to ensure the continued and *significant* improvements in participants' health and well-being, as well as continued savings in health care spending. Recognizing Vermont's unique budget challenges this year, **we ask that the Legislature provide only level funding from DAIL for SASH for FY 2022.**