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Governor Northam Announces Emergency Funding to Shelter Virginia's Homeless Population

Initial $2.5 million in funding will house unsheltered individuals, support case management

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today announced an initial $2.5 million in emergency funding to shelter Virginia's statewide homeless population during the COVID-19 pandemic. This emergency support will provide temporary housing for the approximately 1,500 Virginians who are currently unsheltered or rely on shelters that require them to leave every day. The funding will also provide housing for individuals in shelters that may need to be quarantined, or where social distancing is not feasible.

"As we battle this unprecedented public health crisis, we must make sure no one is left behind," **said Governor Northam**. "I have issued a statewide Stay at Home order, but we know there are many Virginians with no home to stay in. With this funding, we will ensure people experiencing homelessness have access to immediate housing options and help prevent the spread of COVID-19."

Funding will be used for hotel and motel vouchers, case management, food, cleaning supplies, and medical transportation. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide partial funding to support individuals experiencing homelessness who are 65 and older, those with other pre-existing conditions, and those who have tested positive for COVID-19. People experiencing homelessness are more likely to have chronic health conditions that go untreated, and are among the populations most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. In recent years, Virginia has seen an increase in the number of older adults experiencing homelessness.

Virginia's housing support system also relies largely on the use of congregate shelters, which can lack adequate space for social distancing. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) have provided guidance to homeless shelters on best practices to safely serve the homeless population during the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, DHCD is preparing additional housing options for an estimated 10 percent of the 3,890 Virginians currently in shelters to allow space for social distancing and safe quarantine practices as needed.

The Commonwealth has implemented a number of state and federal protections against housing insecurity during the COVID-19 crisis. The Supreme Court of Virginia has suspended eviction proceedings in all district and circuit courts through April 26, and evictions for all Housing Choice Voucher holders are halted for 120 days.

For all mortgages guaranteed by federal mortgage programs, including Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) mortgages, the mortgage provider will defer mortgage payments—principal plus interest—for up to three months for those who have lost income due to COVID-19.

Additional resources and information about Virginia's COVID-19 response are available at virginia.gov/coronavirus.

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