

March 29, 2023

I am writing in support of the investments being made in housing through the Housing Finance Omnibus Bill.

I support the investments in the Housing Trust Fund and the Bridges Rental Assistance program targeted for people with mental illnesses. Both programs advance the goal of ending homelessness in our community.

Individuals with mental illness are much more likely to face housing instability or even homelessness. Unmanaged mental health symptoms, job loss, inpatient mental health treatment, or an experience with the criminal justice system all increase the challenges that people with mental illnesses face when trying to find and maintain a stable housing situation. People with mental illnesses cannot achieve recovery without stable housing.

We experience this every day at Touchstone Mental Health where we support individuals in both permanent supportive housing and community-based housing with commercial landlords. The biggest barrier to housing is affordability and rental assistance programs that are flexible, person-centered and limited to 30% of a person's income are the best ways to promote recovery and choice. The investment in these programs is needed and a wise investment for our state.

Sincerely,

Ellie Skelton

Ellie Skelton MA

CEO | Executive Director, Touchstone Mental Health

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers eskelton@touchstonemh.org

Direct: [612-767-2160](tel:612-767-2160) | **Main:** [612-874-6409](tel:612-874-6409) | **Fax:** [612-874-0157](tel:612-874-0157)