

April 15, 2024

Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee
Chair Port, Vice Chair Bolden, and Ranking Minority Lead Lucero,

Subject: [SF 4158 A3 \(Delete-all amendment\)](#) - Housing budget omnibus

Dear Committee Members,

The Stable Housing is Priority (ShiP) Collaborative appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Senate Housing Omnibus bill. We've had the chance to testify and submit a letter in the past about SF 4704 (Workgroup on Expedited Rental Assistance) and are pleased to see the inclusion of a variation of it in SF 4168, as amended. We are also pleased to see the appropriation of \$10 million towards addressing housing needs.

However, we are disappointed that not all of the provisions from SH 4704 are included in this omnibus bill, and more so, that ShiP's recommendation to include trauma-informed and culturally competent languages are not included.

We'd like to re-emphasize the importance of making access to Emergency Assistance (EA), Emergency General Assistance (EGA), Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) faster and timelier. To this end, we encourage you to again consider adding language from the WERA bill and the following items.

Single Application Portal

Developing a universally accessible online platform for Emergency Financial Assistance applications. A coordinated platform for Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP), Emergency Assistance (EA), and Emergency General Assistance (EGA) will simplify the process for both participants and staff. By minimizing redundant paperwork and streamlining information gathering, stress on applicants can be significantly reduced.

Trauma-Informed Design

Implementing a trauma-informed approach in all communications and interactions is crucial. Emergency situations are inherently sensitive, and clear, empathetic language in forms and communications can make a significant difference in the experience of those seeking assistance.

Diverse Access Points

Establishing multiple access points for application submission, including online, in-person, and via phone, ensures inclusivity and accommodates varying preferences and needs. Collaboration with community organizations to support applicants in completing applications is an essential component.

Culturally Competent Assistance

Cultural competence is vital in addressing the diverse backgrounds of applicants. Staff training and language assistance services should be prioritized to eliminate language barriers and ensure that assistance is accessible to all.

Transparent Eligibility Criteria

Clearly communicating eligibility criteria and providing detailed information on required documentation will help manage expectations, reduce confusion, and alleviate applicants' anxiety.

Fast-Track Processing

Implementing expedited processing for emergency cases through technology automation will ensure swift assistance to those in immediate need.

Cost Implications

Initial implementation costs, technology maintenance, staffing considerations during peak times, and community outreach programs should be factored into the budget for the successful execution of the programs.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvements

Allocating funds for periodic evaluations and improvements based on feedback from applicants and stakeholders will ensure the system remains responsive and supportive.

Again, we thank you for your time and dedication to addressing housing accessibility and affordability. We trust that, with your support, we can significantly impact the lives of those facing housing instability in our great state.

Sincerely,

Stable Housing is the Priority (SHiP) Collaborative Members