



Testimony of Elissa Margolin
Before NH Housing Finance Authority
Regarding the Allocation Plan for the National Housing Trust Fund

Good morning. Thank you for convening this hearing as you work to develop New Hampshire's Allocation Plan for the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF).

My name is Elissa Margolin. I serve as director of Housing Action NH. Housing Action NH is a coalition of 80 organizations and business united around affordable housing policy. We count among our membership developers (both non-profit and for-profit), financial institutions, property managers, homeless service providers, public housing authorities and low income family advocates. Together, we work to improve state and federal policy so everyone in New Hampshire has a place to call home.

Before naming some general considerations for your Allocation Plan, I would like to thank NH Housing Finance Authority for the work you have done to date to prepare to administer these new resources. Thank you for your outreach to those developers interested in serving Very Low Income (VLI) and Extremely Low Income (ELI) households and thank you for including homeless service providers at the table as well.

Rental Production Over Homeownership. Given the very low vacancy rates as evidenced by your housing market survey, the lack of affordable rental homes for VLI and ELI households and the lack of affordable rental housing that extends stays at homeless shelters, we ask that the allocation plan dedicate the NHTF resources to the development of affordable rental housing.

Incentives for Developers. It was gratifying to hear interest from a variety of developers at your recent meeting on the Trust Fund. Even those with little history building or serving ELI residents or those transitioning from homelessness appeared interested in bringing their development expertise to the table with hopes of partnering with experienced service organizations. However, we know that there can be a long journey between "general interest" and a veritable project proposal. We look to NH Housing to structure the resources to encourage engagement.

Working with Homeless Agencies and Experienced Service Providers. In addition to providing incentives to experienced developers, we urge you to include agencies with a strong track record in serving the homeless and ELI households. Many of NH's shelters and service agencies have made a significant impact in preventing ELI households from becoming homeless and have worked tirelessly to place those in shelters in rental homes. This year's Point in Time count shows a 9% decrease in the homeless population. With the strong leadership at the Bureau of Homeless and Housing Services and the growing commitment around the state to coordinate entry and prioritize resources, our numbers are small enough in NH that we could functionally end homelessness if we had enough affordable rental housing. The projects developed with NHTF resources are key to this quest to end homelessness in New Hampshire. We hope your allocation

plan with include language specific to addressing the housing needs of NH's homeless population with NHTF projects.

Keeping Rents Affordable. As we have inquired prior to this hearing, we are concerned that HUD's NHTF regulations that set a maximum rent at the greater of either 30% of the federal poverty line or 30% of Area Media Income will create a barrier to access for ELI households and the homeless. We are pleased to learn that you are considering using project-based Housing Choice Vouchers to keep rents affordable and ensure compliance with the affordability period of 30 years.

We want to acknowledge that this is a new effort and we look forward to working with you to ensure its successful implementation. You can count on Housing Action NH to track the NHTF's progress, promote best practices and continue to advocate for additional resources so everyone in New Hampshire has a place to call home.