

BUDGET HEARING REMARKS TEMPLATE

INSTRUCTIONS

The sentences in bold are the main messages. Below each “main message” is a list of suggestions for what you could specifically include in your remarks.

Remember: This document is to assist you in crafting your remarks but it is only a suggestion. You should make your remarks personal.

Remember: You have less than 3 minutes to deliver your remarks at the budget hearing so you want to get to the point quickly and succinctly!

For further assistance in crafting your remarks for the early January budget hearings, contact Phyllis at phyllis@vceh.org or 703-861-0102.

TALKING POINTS

1. Introduce yourself and in 20 words or less explain your role in the field of ending homelessness and / or affordable housing.

You might include:

I have had the experience of homelessness.

AND / OR

I am affiliated with a homeless services program / housing provider / housing authority / community services board / faith community / other agency.

AND / OR

I am a concerned citizen.

2. Tell a story of success AND / OR talk about why ending homelessness is important.

You might include:

If you have personally had the experience of homelessness, tell your story very briefly.

Include how you became homeless (lost a job, substance abuse issue, etc) and the programs and services which helped you. Your story and your willingness to tell it is critical to increasing knowledge of the true causes of and solutions to homelessness.

AND / OR

If you administer a program,
talk concretely about your program and include how many people you serve, what services you provide, any outcome data, etc. You may wish to tell a story of how your program helped a specific client back into housing.

AND / OR

If you administer the Homeless Intervention Program, State Shelter Grant or Child Services Coordinator Grant,
mention it by name and talk about the critical services that it provides.

AND / OR

Consider talking about the cost effectiveness of prevention and rental assistance v shelter, jail and foster care if you have this data. Visit www.vceh.org for data on this topic if needed.

OR

If you do not fit the categories above,
talk about how important housing is to end homelessness. You can visit www.vceh.org for data on affordable housing.

Suggestions particularly for those members of the faith community:
“All people are equally valuable in God's sight. When persons are denied access to or opportunity for decent housing, their humanity is diminished.”

“Housing speaks to deep moral concerns. Meeting the needs of the homeless stranger is recognized as a duty in all major religions and moral teachings.”

“Budget cuts to the least of these do not solve the problem, instead it just hurts more families.”

3. I understand that difficult decisions must be made in these trying economic times. But we cannot afford the proposed 18% cut to homeless and housing programs.

Everyone:

Each of the state funded housing and homeless programs provide a critical resource on a continuum of need for preventing or ending homelessness for families and individuals and providing and sustaining affordable housing. The programs are: the Homeless Intervention Program, State Shelter Grant, Child Care for Homeless Children Program, Child Services Coordinator Grant, and the Indoor Plumbing Rehabilitation (IPR) program.

AND / OR

If you administer the HIP program:

State funds for the Homeless Intervention Program, commonly called HIP, have already been cut by 10 percent. And the Governor's budget proposal proposes an 18 percent cut to HIP and the other homeless programs. HIP provides temporary rental or mortgage assistance along with supportive services to help individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness maintain their housing.

AND / OR

If you do not administer the HIP program:

State funds for the Homeless Intervention Program, commonly called HIP, have already been cut by 10 percent. And the Governor's budget proposal proposes an 18 percent cut to HIP and the other homeless programs. HIP provides temporary rental or mortgage assistance along with supportive services to help individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness maintain their housing.

AND / OR

If you have had the experience of homelessness:

My homelessness could have been prevented. There is a program called the Homeless Intervention Program which provides financial assistance and case management to help people stay in their homes. This program is critical but it has already been cut.

4. "I respectfully request that the Governor and General Assembly maintain current levels of funding for state homeless and housing programs."

MY REMARKS -- JUST FOR AN EXAMPLE

My name is Phyllis Chamberlain and I am the Executive Director of the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness. VCEH is the statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in Virginia. Our focus is on pragmatic methods to achieve this goal.

Our current state budget crisis poses grave threats to families and individuals who experience homelessness. VCEH requests that the Governor and the General Assembly protect the homeless and housing programs which serve those who often need just a little assistance in these dire economic times. This includes the Homeless Intervention Program, State Shelter Grant, Child Care for Homeless Children Program, Child Services Coordinator Grant, and the Indoor

Plumbing Rehabilitation (IPR) program among others. Each of these programs provides a critical intervention for either preventing homelessness before it occurs, preserving affordable housing, or ending a homeless episode for a family or individual. In addition, the availability of these funds allows local organizations and local governments to leverage other private dollars as well as federal and local public funds.

I understand the significant challenges that the budget crisis poses and I know that these are not easy times and these are not easy decisions to make. However, the proposed 18% cut to the homeless and housing programs today will have a devastating impact on Virginia families not only today but will have an even more significant impact on families and financial costs tomorrow.

Prevention is more humane and cost effective than the alternatives.

For example,

The average cost of financial assistance to prevent families from experiencing homelessness through the HIP program is approximately \$2,100.

Yet, the average cost for one emergency shelter bed in Virginia is \$10,000 per year.

Families who experience homelessness are often more likely to lose their children to the foster care system. The average cost for foster care for one child is \$52,000 per year.

All data point to the same conclusion: people on the streets or in shelters cost taxpayers millions in the use of foster care, emergency rooms, psychiatric hospitals and other emergency services. It costs MORE to leave someone on the street than to house them.

I respectfully request that as the General Assembly makes difficult budget choices, you maintain current levels of funding for the state homeless and housing programs and consider the devastating impact that cuts will have on Virginia's most vulnerable.

Thank you.