

Damon R. Maher

Legislator, 10th District
Chair, Labor & Housing



Committee Assignments
Budget & Appropriations
Parks & Recreation
Planning, Economic Development & Energy

MEMORANDUM

TO: Benjamin Boykin, Chair, Board of Legislators

FROM: Damon R. Maher, Legislator – 10th District

DATE: December 3, 2020

RE: Supportive housing

Please add the attached article from LoHud dated November 19, 2020 entitled “Westchester Suffering Housing Crisis- ESSHI Program Can Help” for referral as correspondence to Budget & Appropriations, Labor & Housing and Social Services committees.

Here is a link to the article:

<https://www.lohud.com/story/opinion/2020/11/19/westchester-suffering-housing-crisis-esshi-program-can-help>

OPINION *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Westchester is suffering a housing crisis. ESSHI program can help | Opinion

Richard Nightingale Special to the USA TODAY NETWORK

Published 6:00 a.m. ET Nov. 19, 2020

This week marked an important milestone in a more than \$40 million transformational investment to benefit one of Westchester's most underserved communities whose members face new challenges and threats at this unique moment in New York history.

The roof was placed on Dayspring Commons, a state-of-the-art, 63-unit affordable residential building in the Nodine Hill neighborhood of Yonkers. The project is part of Westhab's larger vision, which includes a major renovation to the former Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church building next door to create the Dayspring Community Center.

This "Dayspring Campus" marks a new chapter of opportunity in Nodine Hill. It will feature comprehensive youth and adult education programs, year-round after school and summer youth programming, vocational training and employment counseling, family programming, a food pantry, and more. It will provide a pathway to college, living-wage careers, and long-term success for individuals who want to make positive changes in their lives, but need support to do so.

It took a village of public and private investors to make the Dayspring vision possible. A key component was the Gov. Andrew Cuomo's 15-year commitment to combat homelessness across New York: The Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI). If the Cuomo administration is to continue the success it has so far realized in combating homelessness across New York and protecting some of our most vulnerable residents, it's imperative that this program continue.

For subscribers: Yonkers' Nodine Hill to get affordable housing, revamped community center

More: Yonkers-based developer sees green with proposed eco-friendly affordable housing building

ESSHI funds supportive housing, which, for the past three decades, has provided an affordable place to live and on-site services for homeless individuals. In Nodine Hill, it will fund services and rental subsidies for 37 formerly homeless families, including 25 young parents and their children.

ESSHI has been a tremendous success, creating more than 4,600 units of supportive housing across the state in the last four years, including in parts of New York where secure funding for this type of housing previously did not exist. However, of the governor's 2016 commitment for 20,000 units, only 6,000 have been funded. Without a new five-year commitment in this year's budget for the next 7,000 units, this successful program will end. And so will the hope of transforming more lives and more communities.

New York faces a massive, multibillion dollar budget gap as a result of the economic fallout wrought by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, but funding for capital projects is a long-term investment in the health and well-being of our communities. The up-front investment in supportive housing saves money in the long run, decreasing the need for homeless shelters and reducing reliance on emergency public safety and health care services.

A 2013 study of homeless, disabled New Yorkers placed in supportive housing created following the 2005 New York/New York III Supportive Housing Agreement found that taxpayers saved a net average of \$10,100 per person per year, with an average \$77,425 per tenant per year savings realized from individuals who moved out of state-operated psychiatric facilities.

As our state continues to grapple with COVID-19, as well as the persistent inequities that plague our society and deny opportunities to people of color, we are seeing some alarming trends as homelessness, joblessness and hunger are on the rise. We simply cannot afford to end successful programs like ESSHI that invest in underserved communities and give formerly homeless households a fighting chance.

Supportive housing also helps protect both vulnerable New Yorkers and members of the broader communities in which they reside from getting infected with COVID-19 by keeping people off the streets and out of crowded shelters. Safe, secure housing with independent apartments makes social distancing and quarantines—if necessary—easier to accomplish.

This week's topping off was the harbinger of more good things to come. Next spring, we will cut the ribbon on Dayspring. At that moment, we will officially welcome 63 families to their new home and hundreds of neighborhood residents to their new community center. We only

hope we can replicate this effort in the future, continue the push to end homelessness, and give everyone in our community the opportunity to thrive for many years to come.

Richard Nightingale is the president and CEO of Westhab.