

Sign on letter

August 2021

To: Morris County Board of Commissioners

As professionals and community members, we recognize our role in ending homelessness and take responsibility as informed leaders who can advocate for housing to end homelessness and improve our community. We are committed to bettering the community in which we live and work. Housing stability improves the health of our community members, improves the fiscal well-being of our healthcare systems, and improves the quality of life for everyone in our community. We strongly support ending homelessness and are committed to ensuring that our employees, volunteers, members, and patrons are able to obtain and maintain stable housing.

While lack of affordable homes affects several Morris County populations, housing the most vulnerable, chronically homeless, or disabled persons, is particularly challenging because of the high level of rental subsidy and supportive services necessary to make a home affordable and livable.

An efficient way to meet the challenge, at least partially, would be the establishment of a County Homeless Trust Fund, which would be funded by small fees - \$3 or \$5 – assessed on various documents registered by the County that would then be aggregated into a significant new and locally-controlled pool of funds specifically designated to reduce or prevent local homelessness.

We believe these funds, which would be overseen by a HTF Task Force that works closely with the Continuum of Care Executive Committee and the Morris County Departments of Human Services, Community Development and Emergency Management, can be a very effective and **non-tax-based** complement to existing federal, state, and local funds now used to address the increasing challenges associated with homelessness and Code Blue services.

We fully recognize and appreciate that Morris County currently provides a wide variety of high-quality services that address homelessness via a collaborative network of public and private not-for-profit agencies. We thank you for the significant financial and staff commitment by the County to bettering the lives of its constituents. However, updated data trends, a recent analysis by Monarch Housing and the unexpected challenges due to the COVID pandemic, **new and more permanent funding sources** will be required to address increasing needs related to homelessness-related services and the lack of affordable housing in Morris County.

The HTF will provide a tremendous opportunity to help relieve suffering with **little or no cost to most Morris County citizens**. Eleven other NJ counties have already been using a HTF to successfully address their **locally prioritized** needs. HTF could be used in Morris County to meet gaps in funding not currently addressed by other funding streams. Effectively addressing the challenges of homelessness impacts not only those directly served – it effects the entire community.

Therefore, we urge you as County Commissioners, to seize this opportunity to further enhance the quality of life in Morris County by establishing a Homeless Trust Fund.

Sincerely,

Morris Habitat for Humanity