

Establishing A Policy To Reform Social Services – Temporary Assistance – Housing

Referred to: The Health, Human Services and Housing Committee (Chairman Uchitelle and Legislators Corcoran, Erner, Lopez, Nolan, Petit, and Stewart), and The Ways and Means Committee (Chairman Gavaris and Legislators Cahill, Criswell, Roberts, and Ronk)

Legislator Phil Erner offers the following:

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature finds that housing is a natural right; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has certain responsibilities to the people of Ulster County to provide temporary assistance (TA) in the form of temporary and emergency housing; and

WHEREAS, such TA housing is largely governed by New York State law, Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance (OTDA); and

WHEREAS, at present the people of Ulster County have an especially acute need for TA housing; and

WHEREAS, various client households currently or recently housed under DSS TA have recommended improvements to these services; and

WHEREAS, clients whose expectations DSS TA fails to meet are urged to file a Fair Hearing with OTDA; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that DSS TA shall communicate in person with clients who are present at DSS office at Development Court, except that if client states their preference that DSS communicate electronically in any usual format that DSS can including but not limited to phone or email, then DSS TA shall instead communicate in such manner with such client; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that DSS, in coordination with Public Works and additional departments as necessary, ~~should submit for the 2024 budget a~~ **shall** plan for DSS to remain open at all times, not only its current business hours of 8 am to 5 pm excluding holidays, to handle TA housing cases, and shall cause the same to be enacted during the first quarter of 2024; and, be it further

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RESOLVED, that DSS, in coordination with Public Works and additional departments as necessary, ~~should submit for the 2024 budget~~ a **shall** plan for DSS to improve its waiting areas; which recommendations by the Legislature include the erection of a big-top at Development Court parking lot, and designating an area especially for households with children; and shall cause the same to be enacted during the first quarter of 2024; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that, as a part of clients' TA housing placements, DSS shall establish a transportation plan for such clients that ensures that clients and their household can arrive at and return from such places including but not limited to work sites, job interviews, school, groceries and other necessary and sufficient shopping, permanent-housing searches, medical appointments and storage units; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that for any client interviews conducted by DSS for the purpose of evaluation of services, DSS shall compensate clients in ways including but not limited to stipends and provision of childcare during the interview process; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that DSS, in coordination with Public Works and other departments as necessary, ~~should propose for the 2024 budget~~ **shall by December 1, 2023 plan for** the establishment of additional public, emergency-housing shelters around the County which in their totality can accommodate the range of household types and client situations now encountered by DSS TA and at present accommodated in motels or other private facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that DSS shall inform at once, and coordinate to remind during inspections or communications by other departments, all private facilities currently or anticipated to be available for TA housing, that such facilities' refusal of TA housing placements of DSS clients may be referred to local or county law enforcement, NYS attorney general and/or state and county human rights commissions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that DSS shall report monthly to the Legislature's committee(s) of jurisdiction about needs for workforce, funds, and other resources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that, whether or not ODTA approves, DSS shall ensure that clients who present in need of TA housing thereby obtain it,

and move its adoption.

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ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

No Action Taken in Committee: Health, Human Services and Housing on July 5, 2023 with consent

Postponed in Committee: Health, Human Services and Housing on August 1, 2023

No Action Taken in Committee: Health, Human Services and Housing on September 6, 2023 with consent

Passed Committee: Health, Human Services and Housing on _____.

Passed Committee: Ways and Means on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

TBD