

Setting Minimum Habitability Standards For Emergency Housing Contracts And Establishing A Policy Requiring Transportation Access For Emergency Housing Facilities In Ulster County

Referred to: The Housing and Transportation Committee (Chairman Collins and Legislators Clinton, Corcoran, Harmon, Kitchen, McCollough, and Stewart), and The Ways and Means Committee (Chairman Gavaris and Legislators Collins, Hansut, Kovacs, Nolan, Roberts, and Uchitelle)

Legislator Eric J. Kitchen offers the following:

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature has received multiple reports regarding unsafe, unsanitary, and overcrowded conditions in certain motels used for emergency housing placements, including instances of pest infestation, unsafe drinking water, and failure to provide clean linens; and

WHEREAS, the County presently places over 50 families, including nearly 100 children, at the Kingston Motel and additional families at other motel facilities under contract with the Department of Social Services; and

WHEREAS, the County pays a nightly rate of \$110 per room for these placements, representing a significant taxpayer investment, and the Legislature has an obligation to ensure that public funds are used to provide humane, safe, and dignified shelter; and

WHEREAS, emergency housing is intended to be temporary, yet the current housing crisis has forced many families to remain in motels for extended periods, making it imperative that conditions meet basic health and safety standards; and

WHEREAS, reliable access to public transportation is an essential component of maintaining family stability, enabling residents of emergency housing to reach schools, workplaces, health care, and community services; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature hereby establishes Minimum Habitability Standards that must be included as contract terms binding any facility or provider that contracts with the Ulster County Department of Social Services for emergency housing placements; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that such contract terms shall include, at a minimum, the following requirements:

- Provide clean linens (sheets, towels, pillowcases, blankets) at the time of placement and weekly thereafter;

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- Maintain a regular pest control and extermination program, with immediate remediation upon any report of infestation;
- Ensure safe drinking water, including quarterly independent water quality testing be made available to emergency housing residents and to the Ulster County Department of Social Services;
- Complete necessary repairs, including leaks, heating, cooling, electrical, and plumbing issues, within 72 hours of notice;
- Provide emergency housing residents with clear written information, upon placement, outlining their rights under these standards and the process for escalating complaints; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Department of Social Services conduct inspections of contracted emergency housing facilities at least once per quarter to verify compliance with these standards; that if a facility fails to meet these minimum standards, the Department of Social Services suspend new placements until compliance is restored, and report such suspensions to the Clerk of the Legislature within 10 days; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature hereby establishes a policy requiring Ulster County Area Transit (UCAT) evaluate and, where feasible, establish regularly scheduled stops at emergency housing facilities under contract with the County, including but not limited to the Kingston Motel, to ensure emergency housing residents have safe and reliable access to transportation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect immediately,
and moves its adoption

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

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Access For Emergency Housing Facilities In Ulster County**

Passed Committee: Housing and Transportation on _____.

Passed Committee: Ways and Means on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

TBD