



Sustainable, Local Solutions to Homelessness: *20/20 & Housing First*

How can 20/20 address the urgent moral disgrace of thousands of individuals and families homeless in Baltimore? The Baltimore Housing Roundtable and Disability Rights Maryland believe that part of the solution must be fully funding a “Housing First” model that focuses on immediate, permanent housing for persons experiencing homelessness. The Mayor’s recent [Workgroup on Homelessness Report](#) endorsed the Housing First model and called for significant investment in new affordable housing, including supportive housing, for persons experiencing homelessness. Yet the Report proposed no new specific funding source. The 20/20 Campaign helps fill that funding gap and should be enacted immediately.

What is Housing First?

Housing First operates under the belief, and practice, of making sure that the basic human need for shelter is met so that all people can live with dignity, regardless of their circumstances. This includes people experiencing homelessness. No one has to prove they are “ready” for housing. By providing housing first, a stable environment, and elective services, we can make sure all of our neighbors are housed. With Housing First, everyone is ready for housing. Important supports are made available to people once they are housed, to help them maintain their housing. Housing First was developed to meet basic needs like food and a place to live as a foundation to address other needs such as getting job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance abuse issues. Housing First is an effective solution to homelessness, particularly for persons experiencing chronic homelessness. Housing First models have been shown to be effective in ending homelessness in a number of studies, including several by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).[1] Individuals and families access housing faster and are more likely to remain stably housed.[2]



Aren't People Homeless by Choice?

No. The truth is that there's not enough affordable housing. Further, funding for mental health, substance abuse treatment, and other support services is insufficient to meet the need in our community.

Most people are homeless because they cannot afford the monthly rent. At Disability Rights Maryland, we see many people experiencing homelessness because they are unable to work due to a disability and instead receive Social Security benefits. The monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) check is \$735. The fair market rent for a one bedroom apartment in Baltimore City is \$1,097.[3] Also, many homeless persons work but Maryland's minimum wage is not enough to pay rent and other financial obligations. A person making minimum wage would have to work 91 hours a week for a one-bedroom apartment to be "affordable."

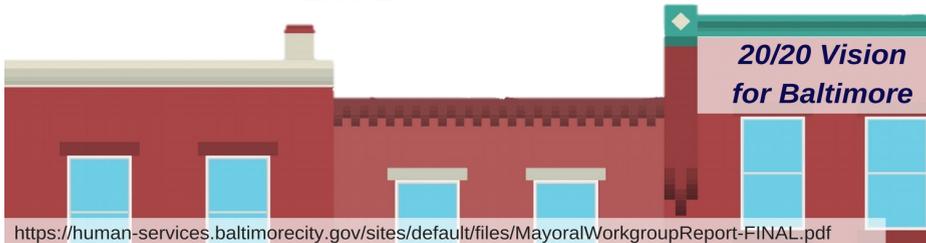
In Baltimore City:



5,252 People experiencing homelessness (FY16)

1,400 Homeless youth under age 25

181 Average length of stay in homelessness



What about Homeless Shelters, Public Housing & Section 8?

Shelters are a bandage; they are not a long-term solution to the shortage of affordable housing. You cannot make a home in a temporary homeless shelter.

Public Housing and Section 8 depend on funding from Congress. Congress doesn't fund these programs at the levels needed to ensure housing for everyone. It is estimated that only 25% of families who need rental assistance receive rental assistance from public housing and the Section 8 program, leaving the remaining 75% of families housing insecure.[4]

One common model of Housing First, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), is targeted to individuals and families with chronic disabilities or substance use disorders who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness. It provides long term rental assistance combined with voluntary supportive services. Most studies have found that services are more effective when a person chooses to engage and has choices about how such supports will be provided. Unfortunately, funding for PSH programs is similarly limited, nationally as well as here in Baltimore.

Clearly, we need local solutions to the affordable housing crisis.

What Can Baltimore Do?

The 20/20 Campaign asks the City to commit \$20 Million each year to create permanently affordable housing, and \$20 million to deconstruct, demolish, and green vacant property by employing returning citizens. Equity is a core principle of the Baltimore Housing Roundtable. Equity demands that those individuals who are most in need of housing and left behind under current programs have a priority in obtaining housing. The 20/20 Campaign has asked that the City place the annual \$20 million for permanently affordable housing into the City's currently unfunded Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This will ensure by law that at least 50% of those funds are spent on housing and related services for individuals and families who are extremely low-income, including persons who are homeless. The City should also adopt the "Housing First" model in allocating these resources.

20/20 and Housing First provide a concrete path for the Mayor to begin delivering on her Workgroup's promise of moving all of our neighbors from the streets to permanent housing

What Can You Do To Help?

- Call your city councilperson, tell them you support the 20/20 Campaign and Housing First

- Show Your Support by Endorsing the 20/20 Campaign at:

<http://www.baltimorehousingroundtable.org>



--Luciene Parsley and David Prater, Disability Rights Maryland



20/20 Vision for Baltimore

#UnitedOnTheBudget #CountingOnCatherine #BmoreAccountable

[1] E.g., Einbinder, S. & Tull, T. The Housing First Program for Homeless Families: Empirical Evidence of Long-term Efficacy to End and Prevent Family Homelessness. 2007. Gulcur, L., Stefancic, A., Shinn, M., Tsemberis, S., & Fishcer, S. Housing, Hospitalization, and Cost Outcomes for Homeless Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities Participating in Continuum of Care and Housing First programs. 2003. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Family Options Study: Short-Term Impacts. 2015.

[2] E.g., Tsemberis, S. & Eisenberg, R. Pathways to Housing: Supported Housing for Street-Dwelling Homeless Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities. 2000. Montgomery, A.E., Hill, L., Kane, V., & Culhane, D. Housing Chronically Homeless Veterans: Evaluating the Efficacy of a Housing First Approach to HUD-VASH. 2013.

[3] Priced Out in 2014: The Housing Crisis for People with Disabilities, The Technical Assistance Collaborative, p. 29, June 2015. Available online at <http://www.tacinc.org/media/52012/Priced%20Out%20in%202014.pdf>.

[4] America's Rental Housing – Evolving Markets and Needs, Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, p. 7. Available online at http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/ahr2013_01_intro.pdf.