

State offers \$158M for supportive housing

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday announced the release of two requests for proposals that make available up to \$158 million for programs that build homeless housing and provide support services aimed at addressing the root causes of housing instability.

The governor's office said the funding is part of an ongoing \$20 billion, five-year plan to create or preserve 100,000 units of affordable housing, which has led to the development of more than 6,600 supportive housing units.

In the latest haul, the state's Homeless Housing and Assistance Program is providing up to \$128 million in capital funding for projects that propose to build supportive housing units or repair emergency shelters, the governor's office said. The enacted 2021 state budget doubled the available funding for the program from \$64 million to \$128 million, which includes \$5 million each for supportive housing for homeless veterans and people with AIDS.

The Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative is also offering up to \$30 million for ongoing services and the operation of supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness who have special needs or conditions. The initiative was formed in 2016 and is administered by the state Office of Mental Health. To date it's provided

services and operating funding for more than 4,600 units of supportive housing, with more than 1,200 expected statewide with the latest money.

"It is heartening to see the governor follow through on these critical funding commitments—especially in these perilous times when more and more New Yorkers are at risk of homelessness," said Cal Hedigan, CEO of Community Access, a nonprofit based in Lower Manhattan that's focused on supportive housing and social services, in a statement provided to Crain's. "We hope that this is followed by funding [for] the next five years and 7,000 units of the governor's Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative."

Sebrina Barrett, executive director of the Association for Community Living, an advocacy group based in Clifton Park in Saratoga County, reiterated the importance of funding for supportive housing, especially during the current public health crisis.

"This will ensure that new development will continue, keeping the pipeline flowing for much needed housing for persons in need of supportive services," Barrett said in a statement provided to Crain's, "including the thousands of New Yorkers who face severe and persistent mental illness." —J.H.