

Identifying and Fixing Barriers to Implementing Permanent Supportive Housing

2025 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
ENDING HOMELESSNESS



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Joy Moses

*Vice President of Research and Evidence
National Alliance to End Homelessness*

Nicole DuBois

*Senior Research Analyst & Coordinator
National Alliance to End Homelessness*

Stephanie Mercier

*Director, Strategy, Impact & Evaluation
CSH*

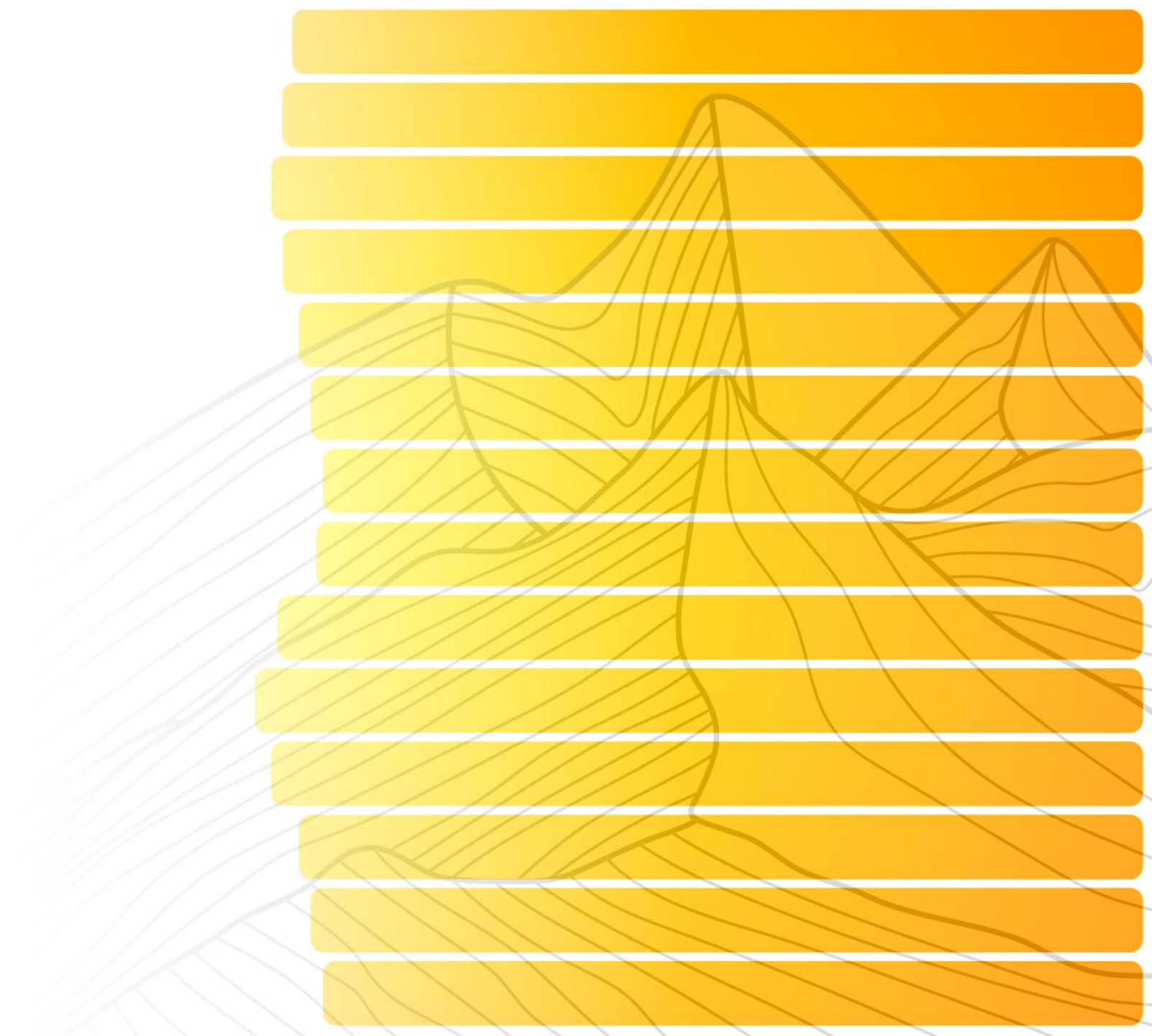
Zenayah Roaché

*Consultant
CSH*

Permanent Supportive Housing, when implemented correctly, is the best approach for extending Housing First to people experiencing the most significant challenges. However, far too many providers are not fulfilling the promise of Housing First: clients may not be getting all the services they need or may experience long wait times for housing. In this session, a team from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the Alliance will highlight what it learned from a year-long effort to gather information from providers, people with lived experience of PSH, and others. They will further invite the audience to contribute to the conversation about how to mobilize PSH to fulfill the promise of Housing First.



Process



Our Team

Corporation
for Supportive
Housing

- Stephanie Mercier
- Zenayah Roaché

National
Alliance to End
Homelessness

- Joy Moses
- Nicole DuBois
- Amiyoko Shabazz



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Why Did We Launch this Project?

- Value in periodically revisiting topics
- Value of collaboration between the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the National Alliance to End Homelessness
- Informing future policy and practice related to the implementation of supportive housing
- Informing policymakers



Focus Group Series

Best way to gather information about supportive housing is to reach out to the field. We asked questions. Over 100 people answered.

In-Person Sessions	Virtual Sessions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indianapolis• New York City• San Diego• Nashville• Los Angeles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban Areas• Rural Areas• People with Lived Experience of supportive housing and homelessness

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Focus Group Series, ctd.

Types of Participants

- Service Providers
- Current and former tenants
- Property Managers
- Developers
- CoC leaders
- Government Officials

Topics

- Elements that are working well
- Challenges:
 - Housing
 - Services
 - Workforce
 - Funding Structures

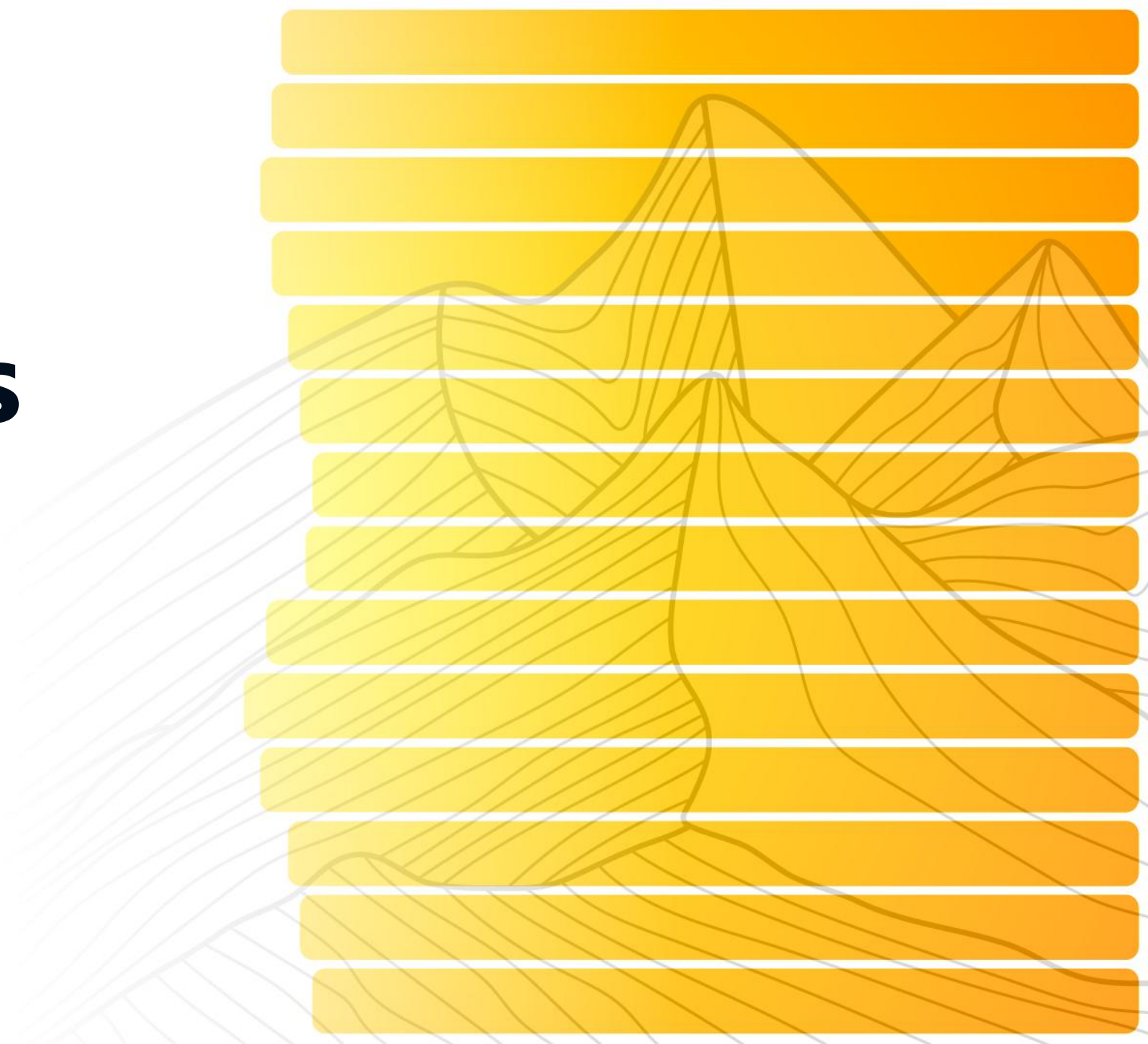




Sample Questions

Please use the conference app to review (and answer) a sampling of questions we asked the group participants.

Challenges



Housing

Primary Issue: There just isn't enough supportive housing to meet the need:

- History of underfunding
- Competition w/ renters not on public assistance
- Competition with renters on other public assistance programs
- NIMBY-ism



“Even in [one of our more liberal towns], we had to do months of working against NIMBY sentiments, going door-to-door and talking to neighbors about the site that we wanted. There are so many obstacles.”

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Housing, ctd.



Limited Choice

Participants often can't choose where they will live, which can impact lives and housing stability



Transition Barriers

Difficulties moving between placements or moving on from supportive housing



Wait Times

Often long waits for services

"We have folks who have been in our program for 10 years who want a different apartment. They want to feel like they're growing and changing. One of our neighbors was able to move into a new unit that has a backyard, and they're thrilled – it feels great that his work has enabled him to move to a different setting. Otherwise, folks feel stuck."

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Housing, ctd.

- **Limited Communication**—Processes and wait times can be unclear, resulting in frustration

“Once we submit the application, we don’t know what’s going on. It may be a while before they hear back. We don’t know what’s going on. The process is opaque. The biggest issue is not knowing.”

- **Subpar Building Conditions**—Broken appliances, failures to clean common areas, rodents, . . .

“[I] immediately turned around and went back to my tent . . . It’s disgusting that places [will have] housing conditions that are low standard.”

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Staffing

Familiar challenges, including workforce shortages and turnover, were highlighted.

"Everyone is understaffed . . . I might finish getting my license before I'm able to hire someone with one."

"My whole life since I was a kid in foster care, I always had case workers who leave and go. As an adult, same scenario."



"How could anyone think that this department is under staffed?"

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Staffing, ctd.

- **Low Wages**—Identifying resources and structures that ensure living wages
- **Stress and Burnout**
 - Managing trauma
 - Not feeling properly trained or supported
 - Difficulties communicating what they can expect in doing the work
- **Competition with Other Work Environments**—higher pay and flexibility not associated with direct services work
- **Fit Between Employees**—considerations of lived experience and education/certifications



Providers do not have the resources to implement the Housing First model as intended.

SAMHSA's fidelity scale includes metrics such as:

- Service mix is highly flexible and can adapt type, location, intensity, and frequency based on tenants' changing needs and preferences.
- Caseload is no more than 15 tenants to each staff member.
- All behavioral health services are provided through a team, including psychiatric services. A good example is an Assertive Community Treatment team.
- Services are available 24/7



Medicaid can be an important source of funding—but there are barriers to accessing it.



What is possible depends on state policy context



Accessing Medicaid reimbursement as a provider is complicated



Uneven adoption can widen disparities between providers that can and providers that cannot bill Medicaid



Does not always align with flexible engagement required of supportive housing case managers

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Providers struggle to meet acute behavioral health needs.

- Revolving door of providers
- Failure to provide consistent services
- Failure to provide information about or choice in services
- Inaccessible services requiring transportation
- Inappropriate crisis response (e.g., involving law enforcement)
- Worse conditions for other residents
- Ultimately: exits to homelessness or unstable housing situations

"The worst case scenario is that someone goes into the unit without the supports they need, and then they get evicted. An eviction makes it harder to get future housing."



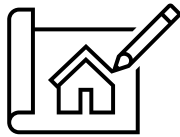
Insufficient funding for services hurt supportive housing residents and staff.

"I think we wildly underestimate what the cost of support really looks like."

"I don't know if there's any project in the whole state that's operating according to its service plan. There's no funding source that will cover 100% of that plan."

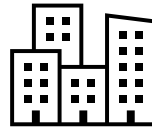


No single federal funding source exists for supportive housing.



Capital

The building – new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition costs



Operations

Ongoing use and maintenance of units



Services

Case management & other supportive services

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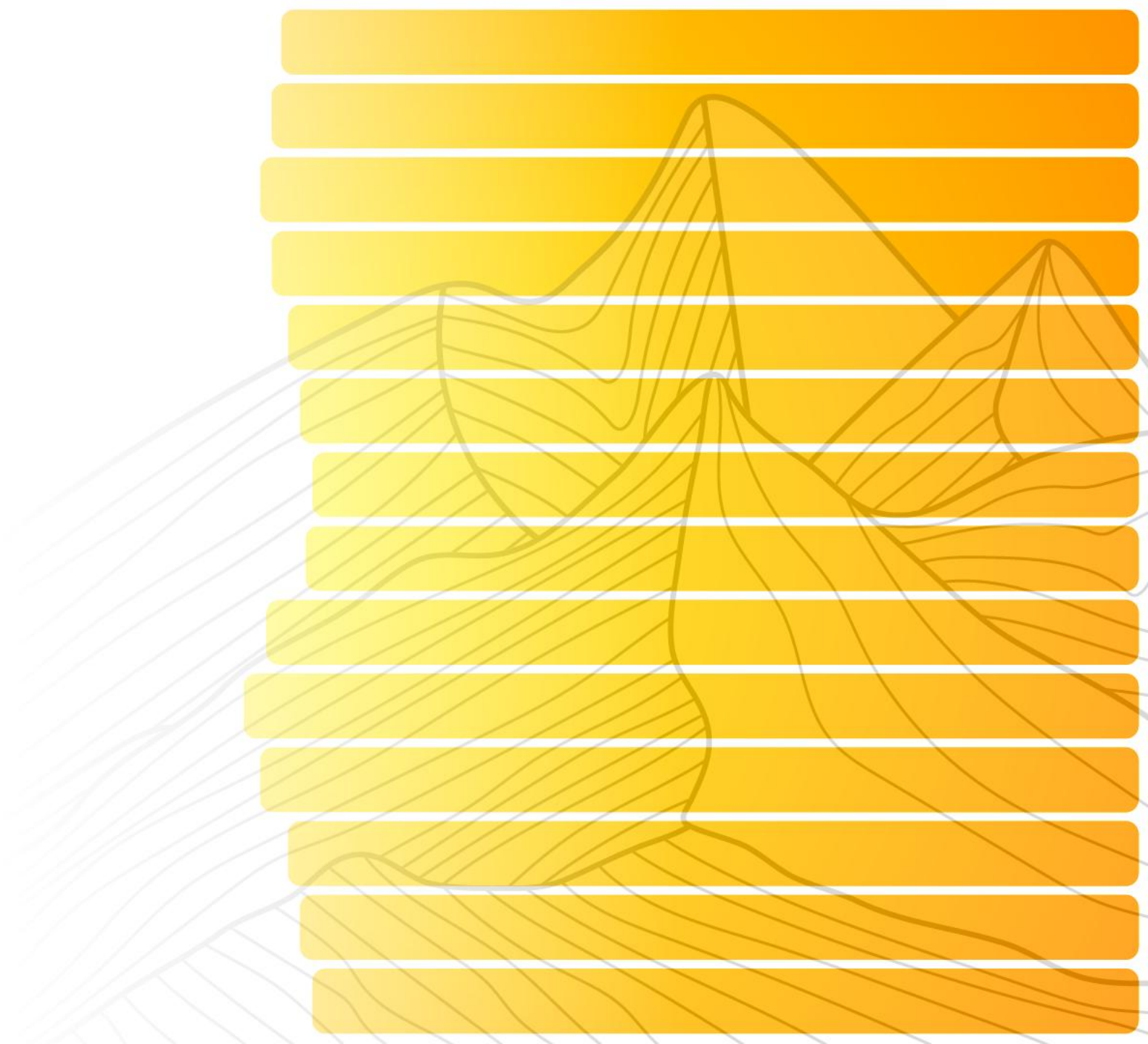


The necessity to braid funds complicates projects and inhibits scaling.

- Competition for limited funds is fierce—both among supportive housing providers and between supportive housing and other priorities like infrastructure and affordable housing
- Securing funding for each component is challenging and makes new projects complex to get off the ground
- Projects may push forward with only hopes for securing the full funding
- Administering projects with multiple funders is challenging and takes up a lot of time in compliance and reporting



Benefits of Supportive Housing



Builds connections and a sense of belonging among tenants.

"We are growing to live with each other, and we understand each other. We all get along."

"I could never participate in anything due to my schedule, but just knowing things were available made me feel a part of things."



Provides meaningful services and supports that improve people's lives.

- When people have housing, they have improved access to health, transportation, and food services.

"Working with this program, I was able to keep my kid from going to foster care with extra help from the staff here."



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The design and location contribute to overall well-being.

- The physical space and location of supportive housing matter-- including easy access to the outdoors and community spaces like gardens.
- Tenants also talked about the opportunity to integrate into the community.

"Community is a backup for the person to have continuity."

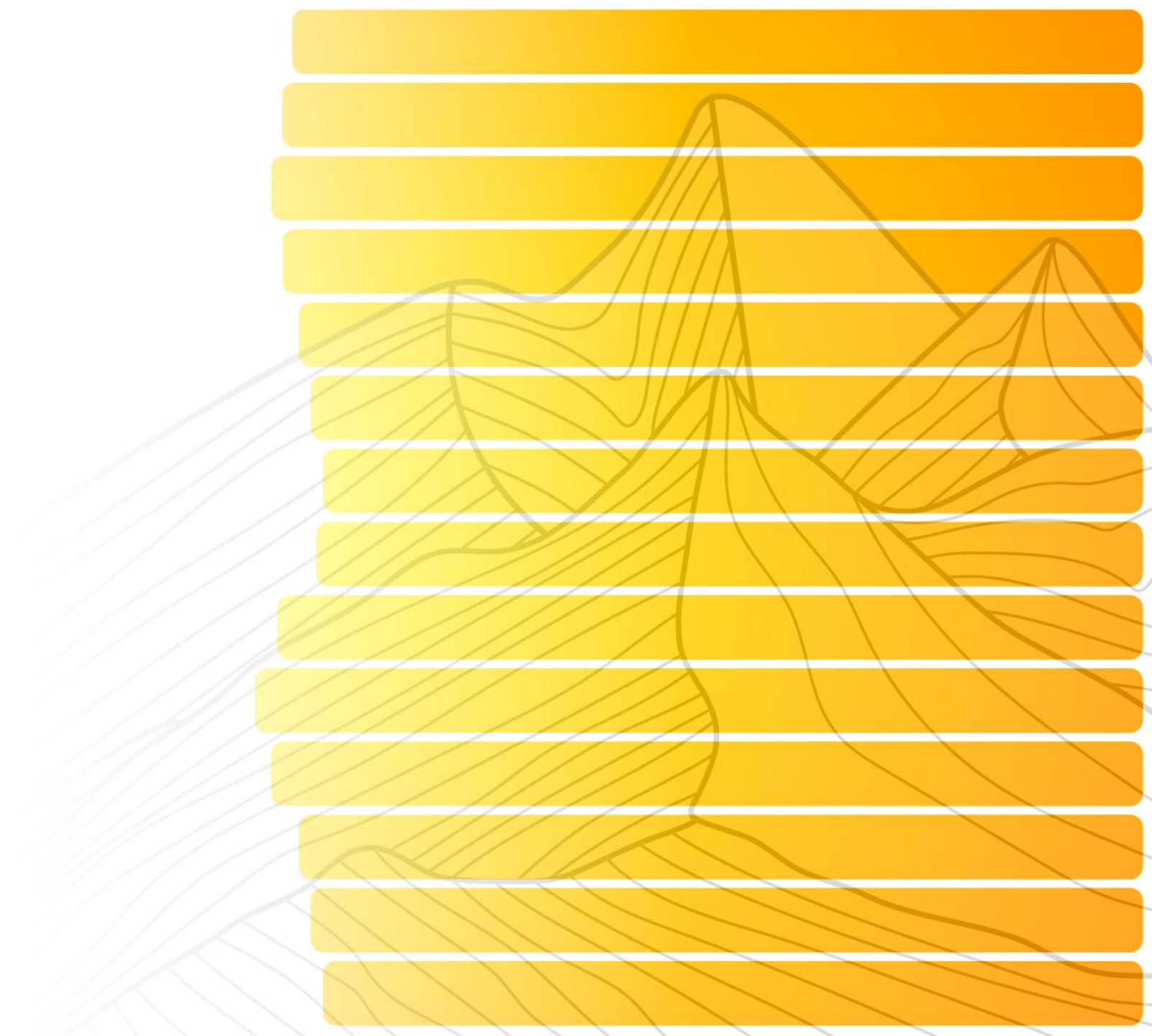


Builds connections among community organizations and across sectors.

- Serves as a jumping off point for broader community partnerships to be developed, like those with health partners and faith-based organizations.
- Coordination within supportive housing (between services and property management) and with other community-based service providers is critical.

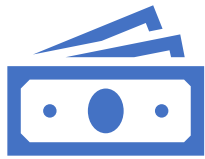


Promising Practices



Solutions from the field.

We asked communities to “share the top 1-2 ideas that [they] think would strengthen the supportive housing field.” They said:



Increase and sustain funding for services and operations.



Provide incentives for development.



Improve staff recruitment and pay.



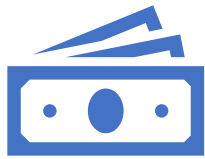
Increase public communication.

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Community Spotlight for Increasing and Sustaining Funding: Indianapolis

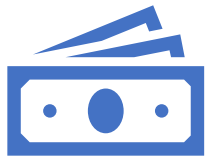
- The **Indianapolis Housing to Recovery (HTR) Fund** is a flexible funding pool dedicated to funding supportive services delivered as part of supportive housing. Funds are made available via outcomes-based contracts.
- **Project Partners:** Indianapolis Foundation, City of Indianapolis, Blue Print Council, Coalition of Homeless Intervention and Prevention, CSH
- **Impact:** 18 awards have been made to date to a range of community service providers and partners
 - More than \$17M has been raised in alignment with the community's goals to end homelessness
 - More than \$8M has been awarded or committed
 - Housing stability rates remain high, in most cases greater than 90%

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Community Spotlight for Increasing Public Communication: NYC

- The **Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) Program** was launched in 2015 to meet the needs of people exiting Rikers Jail who are at risk of homelessness and in need of behavioral health support.
- **Project Partners:** New York City Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, Urban Pathways, CAMBA, and Fortune Society.
- **Lesson Learned:** Program first authorized for expansion in 2019. Advocates have been working since that time to increase the funding so that the service needs of participants can be successfully met.



Promising Practices to Support Staff

Staff Hire	Staff Retention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower educational standards for some positions• Create room for a mix of skills (i.e. property management and service provision in one role)• Hire more people with lived experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incentives (cost of living raises, bonus structures, appealing position titles, career pathway development, unique benefits like pet insurance, etc.)• Wellness Activities (meditation rooms, free gym membership, quarterly sabbatical days for self-care, etc.)• Supportive Environments (regular check-ins, peer support groups, etc.)



Community Spotlight for Staff Support: Indianapolis' Institute for PSH Providers

- Indianapolis has an Institute for PSH Providers made possible by the collaboration of CSH and the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority.
- The Institute helps supportive housing partners navigate the complex process of developing PSH. **As a result of participation, planning and development processes will take less time and obtaining funding will be easier.**
- **Spirit of Co-Learning:** This comes as participants stressed the need for trauma-informed engagement training and had ideas for specialized training for property managers.



Promising Practices to Address Funding Challenges

Landlord Engagement and Incentives	Local and State Funding	Flexible/Special Funding Pools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why landlords?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landlords benefits from renting supportive housing tenants via regular and on-time payments.• Coordinated strategies to build relationships with local landlords and offer benefits, like risk mitigation funds, can unlock new units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• States like Michigan, New York, and Illinois fund rental assistance and supportive services in PSH.• Places that do not have such funding streams in place can do things like dedicate federal passthrough funding (like Community Development Block Grants) to supportive housing projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing flexible funds, through private fundraising or state or local dollars, provides important patches to supportive housing budgets.• Increased funding for veterans helped push developers in San Diego.• HUD's recent Special Notice of Funding Opportunity to Address Rural and Unsheltered Homelessness brought new funding into rural communities.

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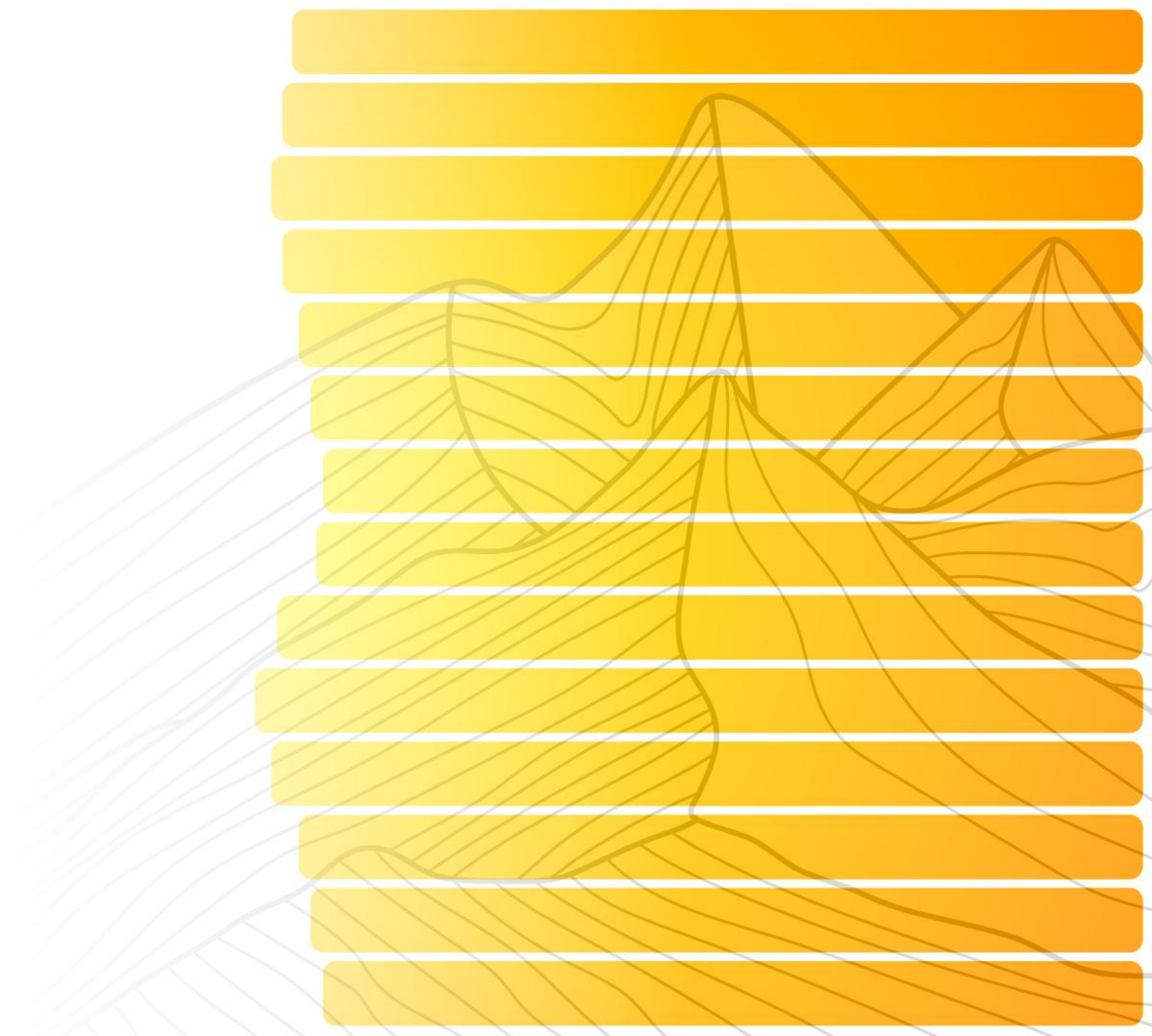
Community Spotlight for Local and State Funding: Michigan Supportive Services Transformation Fund

- The Transformation Fund act as a bridge for non-Medicaid eligible expenses, particularly services that support people in supportive housing. To date, Michigan has appropriated \$26M to pay for services in supportive housing.
- **Project Partners:** Established by the Michigan legislature, administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, advocated for by CSH and housing and service providers.
- **Year 1 Impact:**
 - 470 people served, 98% of whom remained stably housed
 - 96% of participants connected to health insurance
 - 82% of participants maintained or increased their income
 - Caseload sizes reduced and 95% of employees retained.

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Policy Solutions



Increase and sustain funding for services.

Federal Actions	State/Local Actions
Medicaid <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preserve access to Medicaid for supportive housing tenants to ensure access to health care, housing related services, and other critical services.• Advocate for Medicaid improvements through waivers and state plan amendments to increase payments for housing-related services needs for people in supportive housing.	Funding Pools <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build state and local coalitions to provide flexible services funding in alignment with Medicaid (MI and Indianapolis examples) Millages and Taxes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop state/local measures to provide funding for behavioral health needs. (Ann Arbor, MI)

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Increase and sustain funding for operations.

Federal Actions	State/Local Actions
<p>Preserve Housing Vouchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for level funding for housing vouchers for seniors, individuals with disabilities, child welfare involved families, youth exiting foster care, veterans and other special needs (Section 202, 811, and choice vouchers) <p>Expand Rental Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advance the Income-Based Rental Assistance Guarantee for households with incomes up to the higher of 50% of the poverty line or 15% of the area median income.	<p>Funding Pools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build state and local coalitions to provide flexible funding for rent subsidies such as the Los Angeles Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool. <p>Housing Vouchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for state-funded voucher and rental assistance programs, particularly dedicated to child-welfare involved families and youth, justice-involved individuals.

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Increase and sustain funding for housing development. Improve alignment across sources.

Federal Actions	State/Local Actions
<p>Align Eligibility Across Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for the Housing ACCESS Act that would align eligibility across federal departments (HHS, HUD), State Medicaid agencies, public housing agencies, Continuums of Care, and housing finance agencies. <p>Expand and Strengthen the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advance the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (LIHTC expansion)	<p>Designate Funding for Supportive Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• States can designate a portion of their development funding for supportive housing and/or for special populations.

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Remove Barriers to Housing and Increase Choice

Federal Actions	State/Local Actions
<p>Medicaid Reentry Waivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved in some states and can support transitions from the carceral system into the community. <p>Promote Economic Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preserve programs like TANF, SNAP, and tax credits that can help people build wealth.	<p>Remove Barriers to Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advance local and/or state laws that prohibit the use of criminal background, credit checks and/or source of income to deny access to housing

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Q&A

