



creating pathways to stable housing, better health, and financial security

April 21, 2026

Dear County Manager Gailey and Esteemed County Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the City of Westbrook and the Towns of Scarborough and Windham's collaborative proposal to end student homelessness through Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. My name is Victoria Morales, and I am the Executive Director of Project Home. We are proud to partner in this effort.

This proposal directly advances the core mission of CDBG by helping low-income families secure stable housing as a foundation for long-term well-being. It also scales a proven model to three additional Cumberland County communities.

Project Home's Student Homelessness Prevention program, which we piloted in Portland in 2025, is designed to intervene early—before housing instability becomes homelessness—and to resolve crises quickly when they arise. We partner closely with school McKinney-Vento staff, who are often the first to identify students living in cars, doubled up, without a fixed address, or at imminent risk of eviction. Once identified, our housing navigators act immediately to stabilize the situation—preventing eviction when possible and securing housing through our network of more than 1,100 landlord partners.

This is a coordinated, community-based approach: municipalities, schools, and housing providers working together to identify risk early and respond effectively. The goal is simple—prevent children from ever experiencing the disruption and trauma of homelessness.

Over the past eight years, Project Home has refined a model that works. We focus on working families—those in the ALICE population (Asset Limited Income Constrained, Employed)—who earn too much to qualify for traditional assistance but cannot keep up with rising housing costs. For these families, instability is rarely about a single issue; it is the result of layered barriers like credit challenges, prior evictions, income volatility, and lack of social capital. Our role is to remove those barriers and create a clear path to stable housing.

This work is especially critical in a state where 85% of rental housing is owned by private landlords. Project Home bridges the gap between these landlords and families who would otherwise be shut out of the market. In effect, we act as housing brokers—creating access where none exists.



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The need is significant. According to United Way's ALICE data:

- 41% of households in Westbrook (3,631 households) are at risk of eviction
- 27% in Scarborough (2,535 households)
- 30% in Windham (2,310 households)

These are working families living one unexpected expense away from losing their housing. When that happens, children pay the price—through disrupted education, emotional stress, and long-term setbacks.

What sets Project Home apart is accountability. We do not just place families—we stand behind every lease with a financial guarantee and ongoing support. With County funding, Project Home will leverage an additional \$400,000 of our own resources to guarantee leases and ensure successful tenancies for up to two years. This shared investment significantly reduces risk for landlords and strengthens long-term housing stability for families. As a result, 99% of the households we serve remain successfully housed year after year—earning the trust of more than 1,100 landlord partners across Maine.

With over 15 years of combined housing experience, our team is equipped to act quickly, navigate complex challenges, and deliver results. This proposal builds on that foundation by establishing a dedicated Student Homelessness Prevention Specialist to work directly with schools in each partner community. County funding is essential to make this expansion possible—without it, extending services to Windham and Scarborough would strain our capacity and risk the quality of support families receive. With your support, we can scale responsibly—reaching more families while maintaining the outcomes that define this program's success.

This investment will keep children in school, parents working, and families stably housed. It will reduce strain on shelters and emergency systems, and it will leverage private and philanthropic resources to maximize public impact.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to Cumberland County families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Victoria Morales".

Victoria Morales
Executive Director
Project Home