



Rural Housing Coalition

of New York

Working Together to Revitalize Rural New York

Joint Budget Hearing on Housing Testimony

By Michael J. Borges, Rural Housing Coalition Executive Director

First, I want to thank the Legislature for their support last year in providing funding for several programs targeted at small and rural communities, particularly the 6% increase in Rural Preservation Program funding, the \$10 million for the Small Rental Development Initiative (SRDI) and the \$10 million for USDA 515 Preservation.

Once again, the Executive Budget cuts or eliminates funding for these same programs, which seems to be a reoccurring theme and is difficult to reconcile these cuts with the continued housing crisis that we are facing in this state.

The funding for the aforementioned USDA 515 Preservation Program and Small Rental Development Initiative were both eliminated in the Executive Budget. Funding for the Rural Preservation Program, which provides capacity building funding to the network of 60 Rural Preservation Companies (RPCs), which are the nonprofit housing and community development organizations serving Rural New York, was cut by approximately \$3 million.

We ask the Legislature to rollback these cuts and increase funding for the Rural Preservation Program to allow for the addition of four (4) new Rural Preservation Companies (RPCs) as well as provide equitable funding levels so both Neighborhood Preservation Companies (NPCs) and RPCs are funded at the same amounts.

There are rural parts of the state that are currently not served or underserved by Rural Preservation Companies (RPCs), which can assist residents with housing repairs, accessibility modifications for the disabled, housing counseling for first-time homebuyers and the replacement of dilapidated mobile homes, among many other services. For example, there are rural areas in the Hudson Valley, Capital Region and Western New York that currently lack these services. The addition of four new RPCs to serve these areas would require an additional \$520,000 at current funding levels.

Last year we made the case that Rural Preservation Companies and Neighborhood Preservation Companies, which serve urban areas, should receive equal funding. As mentioned previously, the Legislature provided a 6% increase to both, which still leaves rural areas at a disadvantage. We still seek parity, equality, and fairness from New York State to bring funding levels even. We also ask that the \$250,000 carve out in RPP funding for the Rural Housing Coalition be continued.

In addition, we urge the Legislature to roll back the Executive Budget's cuts for the Access to Home and RESTORE/HOPE programs that serve low-moderate income disabled and senior homeowners with accessibility modifications and emergency repairs like leaking roofs or broken furnaces. In addition, we are seeking to expand the scope of the RESTORE program to include non-emergency repairs that will keep seniors safe in their homes without endangering themselves by getting on ladders or messing with faulty wiring or plumbing. The Senate put this proposal, formerly called Safer Homes for Seniors, in their one house budget proposal last year. This year we folded the initiative into the existing RESTORE program and seek a \$6 million increase over 2025 levels.



Rural Housing Coalition

of New York

Working Together to Revitalize Rural New York

The NY Main Street Program, which has seen either decreased or flat funding for the past 5 years, continues to receive more requests for funding than is available (see attached chart). In 2025, the program received 38 applications for \$12 million and in 2024 it received 40 applications for \$11 million. In the last several rounds of awards, a majority of the funding went to villages, which demonstrates that this program serves the smallest of municipalities, which are not suitable for either DRI or RESTORE NY programs. The Rural Housing Coalition requests \$10 million to fund the Main Street Program as well as moving the program from the Capital Fund to the Aid to Localities part of the budget to give greater flexibility in the use of these grants.

The Rural Housing Coalition also urges the Legislature to increase funding for the Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC) from \$26 million to \$30 million. AHC funds the construction and repair of 1–4-unit owner-occupied homes and is one of the most versatile and popular programs administered by HCR. Given that 75% of the housing stock in rural areas is owner-occupied, this program is essential to the well-being of rural communities.

Lastly, we support the restoration of \$40 million in funding for both the Vacant Rental Improvement Program (VRIP) and land banks as well as the Governor’s proposal to increase the number of land banks.