To our amazing membership,

It is with the greatest amount of respect for the providers and communities served by the Three County CoC, and hope for a continued relationship, that I share I will be leaving my position as the Program Director for the Three County CoC at CAPV, mid-November. I am moving on to a position with Friends of the Homeless at Clinical and Support Options, as the Director of Shelter and Housing for Hampshire and Franklin Counties.  I look forward to the opportunity this provides me, in continuing a commitment to addressing homelessness and the chance to work with many partners, still, in this region.

It has been such a pleasure, and highlight of my Career, to lead an amazing team of staff at Community Action Pioneer Valley, as the Collaborative Applicant, Housing Information and Management System (HMIS) Lead, and Coordinated Entry lead for the Three County Continuum of Care (MA-507), since 2019. I took this position in order to have the opportunity to engage in systems level work in the goal of addressing homelessness. I wanted to support efforts to reduce the stigma surrounding people with the need to utilize mainstream benefits, and to shine a light on the realities of factors that contribute to people experiencing homelessness & housing insecurity that I witnessed through working in housing programs, like systemic racism & white supremacy; oppressive state and federal systems; and a lack of mental health supports; but I gained so much more.

I have been privileged to help this region develop strategies to manage these concerns and make changes in partnership with the Western Mass Network to End Homelessness & The Hampden County CoC; to put western Mass on the map for increased funding and resources to provide housing and services to the most vulnerable among us; partner with agencies we fund to change processes & guide opportunities to serve participants more equitably and fully; create accountability measures and support a community investment in training and capacity building; and most importantly, support a regional approach to the CoC’s work that reflects the unique needs & diversity of experiences of populations served by our programs, including diversity in race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, disability, geography, housing status, languages spoken, and lived experience of homelessness.

What I have learned is that nothing is done without building relationship. We built relationships with providers working to create stability for our unhoused populations & manage service delivery, respond to unjust systems and responsibilities with limited funding and an overwhelming pandemic; legislators and municipal leaders who are working tirelessly to support the commitments we name; a community that continues to witnesses an epidemic that we all face, but that recognizes it’s most harmful to those with the most limited resources; and the voices and wisdom offered generously, by those most knowledgeable, those with the expertise that comes from experiencing first-hand, the impact & trauma of homelessness.

To the Board of Directors for the CoC, I thank you, for entrusting me and providing support, responding to our program’s needs, and for helping to evaluate and identify an active and engaged response to meet HUD’s expectations and that is inclusive of the equity and performance measures as well as the unique rural environment of our geographic coverage. To Community Action Pioneer Valley, you made a huge commitment to this work by becoming the Collaborative Applicant for the CoC, and have been the right organization to shepherd the newest iteration of this CoC, it’s growth, it’s learning, and direction.

And, to the mighty, knowledgeable, and generous staff of the CoC, you have been a force and continue to amaze me as you provide meaningful support and guidance to this region’s housing and service providers. I couldn’t be more thankful for your willingness to develop and follow this process through a complicated and important system.

Thank you,

Keleigh Pereira BenEzra