



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** *County Executive Jen Metzger*

******For Immediate Release******

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Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger Calls for Halt to Emergency Housing Placements at Rodeway Inn, Citing DEC Violation and Other Concerns

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger has directed the Department of Social Services to halt emergency housing placements at the Rodeway Inn in the Town of Ulster. On Thursday, April 27, the Ulster County Department of Health communicated to the County Executive's office that the State Department of Environmental Conservation served the Rodeway Inn with a violation of their wastewater operating permit. On Friday April 28, County Executive Metzger conducted an unannounced visit to the motel to inspect the conditions for herself, and made the decision to end all emergency housing placements at the location.

"I am concerned that this facility is not being adequately maintained, and have directed the Department of Social Services to refrain from placing anyone else there and to find new placements for people currently housed at the motel at other locations," said **Ulster County Executive Metzger**. "The well-being of our residents in need of emergency housing is our primary concern."

On Thursday, the Ulster County Department of Health received a notice of violation from the NYS DEC following a March inspection of the facility finding that it was in violation of the State's Water Quality Standard. The motel's State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit, which is required by law, was found to have expired in 2018.

"The failure to comply with State law regarding the SPDES permit is a serious red flag, especially on the heels of other concerns that have been raised about conditions at the motel," said **County Executive Metzger**.

Ulster County is experiencing a housing crisis that has made it difficult for many individuals and families to stay in their homes. The Ulster County Department of Social Services places approximately 300-400 unhoused individual adults and families with children in emergency housing facilities each month. These facilities include two local shelters and approximately 20 motels and hotels. The County is authorized through a New York State program to use local hotels and motels as emergency housing, and the cost of these hotel and motel rooms is shared by New York State and Ulster County.

"We need to move away from the current system of using motels for emergency housing, and create alternatives that are more stable and that provide services for emergency housing residents on site," said **Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger**. "This will take time, but we have two projects in the works that take us in the right direction, including development of a County-owned emergency housing facility for families and a County-supported project by RUPCO to create transitional housing with wrap-around services at the former Quality Inn in the Town of Ulster. At the same time, we have to tackle the root cause by expanding the supply of permanent housing that people can afford, and I will be presenting a proposal to the Legislature for a new Housing Action Fund in the coming weeks."

In the meantime, to address immediate needs in the current system, the County has taken a number of actions to improve emergency housing services for residents, including:

- Providing more predictable transportation to emergency housing placements, for those without a car.
- Providing additional support to residents in emergency housing who are eligible for Adult Protective Services.
- Contracting with Community Action to make regular well-checks at all motels and hotels where emergency housing clients reside.
- Initiating Human Rights investigations by the Ulster County Human Rights Commission into motels and hotels that exhibit discriminatory practices against our emergency housing clients by refusing to provide them rooms.

The County Executive's office has also **initiated an independent evaluation** of Ulster County's emergency housing system, in partnership with **Legislator Abe Uchitelle, Chair of the Health, Human Services, and Housing Standing Committee** and other members of the Legislature. The goal of the evaluation is to ensure services are delivered as efficiently, effectively, and equitably as possible. The evaluation will review the landscape of emergency

and transitional housing, including but not limited to the use of motels, hotels, emergency shelters, and boarding houses. The review will make sure to consult all relevant stakeholders, including emergency housing clients, the Ulster County Continuum of Care, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health, Veteran's Services Agency, nonprofit partners, and all other service providers who provide housing support to people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. On Thursday, April 27, the County released a request for proposals for an agency to conduct this independent evaluation.

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