

My name is Warner Johnson, and thanks to the SHARP Program, as well as endlessly supportive staff who intervened in my weariness, self-doubt and hopelessness, I recently moved to Takoma Park, after living in Rockville and Silver Spring at different shelters.

During my period of experiencing homelessness, and even now as an advocate and encourager of others, the closing of programs and drying up of funding feels like a starvation of basic needs. **I believe there is money in the county or state budget to continue deeply needed programs like Sharp and Exit Bonus.**

Three years ago I was working and was injured several times along the way causing me to lose my job and housing. I started giving up and mentally spiraling downhill. I was literally sleeping on the ground in the streets under bridges over passes or anywhere just to lay my troubled mind and broken Spirit down.

While being in the shelter I remember one evening there was an emergency meeting called for all the residents in which we were told that there would no longer be the **SHARP or Exit Program** because the funding had run dry. There was an exception for those who had already had their application in, which I did, but many others that did not would not be eligible for the alternative program. I thank God that I was able to make the alternative program but my heart sank for those who had a blank stare and all sorts of questions, and a brewing anger because of the short notice. I believe not only is this a homeless issue it also falls under a mental health crisis, and **to have housing supports ripped from under the feet of those in need is devastating.**

It is my hope that the county leadership will prioritize the allocation of resources and funds to address the pressing issues of housing insecurity and homelessness. I ask that you fight for us, and you **fight to fund the programs like Sharp, Exit Bonus, and Emergency Rental Assistance, so that we can create a more equitable and compassionate community.** I am confident that working with the county and others with collaborative efforts and strategic planning, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those most in need.