

Policymakers must take a holistic approach to affordable housing [Letter]

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While many of the expert thoughts that were expressed in the article "[Housing scarce for poor](#)" (March 9) are valid, we believe a solution to remedy at least part of the problem is the addition of supportive services to existing affordable housing, as it takes many stressors off of the system. Supportive services within a housing environment allow the adults in low-income families to gain skills and work toward improving their quality of life so the demand for low-income housing lessens, and those that are classified as "the poorest families in Baltimore" increase their financial self-sufficiency.

Volunteers of America provides supportive services that connect residents to community services such as employment opportunities, transportation, adult and children education classes, GED programs, budgeting/finance training, eviction mediation/prevention, children's services and health and recreational programs in order to help each household gain a higher level of financial independence while living in housing that does not exceed 30 percent of their income. We take a holistic approach to residential services — not only offering below-market rents for low income households but also focusing on supportive services to increase the likelihood of success to build a better life within the community. Success in our program is for each household to be stable and have sustainable employment with the opportunity to increase income levels. Ideally, we would like to see our residents have the option to relocate to other neighborhoods in permanent market rate housing or even become a homeowner.

Russell Snyder, Lanham

The writer is president and CEO of Volunteers of America Chesapeake.

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