

**State Funded Restorative Justice Centers
FY 2025 Budget Memo – Senate Judiciary Committee
Department of Corrections Funding
March 27, 2024**

Rachel Jolly, CEDO Assistant Director, Burlington Community Justice Center

Restorative justice is an *integral and cost saving* - component of Vermont's criminal justice system. Our services are in greater demand, and we are tasked with assisting in reducing caseload and court backlogs, all in light of rising staffing and operational expenses. It is essential that we receive adequate funding to continue to meet the restorative justice needs of our communities and the state.

I'd like to comment on the three primary sources of funding received by the various state-funded restorative justice centers.

AGO: We support the AGO's funding request of \$3,269,511 spread out over 12 organizations.

DCF: We support the phased plan to increase BARJ base funding by a total of \$1M over the course of four years, with what would be the third year of a \$250,000 allocation spread out over 11 organizations, for a total of \$2,499,600.

DOC: We support a 10% increase over the 2024 allocation of \$3,547,311, spread out over 17 organizations for a total of \$3,902,042.

Level funding for any of these would, in effect, be a budget cut due to increasing costs to provide our services:

- Health insurance is increasing by double digits.
- Operational costs, including rent and utilities, is increasing.
- Staffing needs are great – we must be able to offer our staff competitive wages, to both recruit new staff and retain existing staff.

As it relates to DOC funding, we are also requesting the following budget language in order to ensure transparency and clarity:

The Department of Corrections shall allocate \$3,902,042 in grants to the seventeen community justice centers to be allocated in the same proportion, to the same organizations, and for the same purposes as those funds were allocated in FY 2024.

Three Separate Budget Sections/B.338.1

The DOC-funded programs have been funded under Sec. 338.1, which is inaccurately entitled Justice Reinvestment II. Only \$899,652 of the approximately \$10 million in this section is for Justice Reinvestment. Most of the funding goes to transitional housing and CJs. As such, B.338.1 should be divided into three *separate budget sections* so that the funding purpose is clear, with corresponding E section budget language to explain the funding in each section (which would include the requested budget language set forth above in the CJC budget section).