



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

To: House Appropriations Committee

From: Rep. Kathleen James
Bennington-4: Arlington, Manchester, Sandgate, Sunderland

Re: FY25 Funding Request
State funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers

Dear colleagues:

I'm writing to add my support to the recommendation of our House Health Care Committee, which in its budget memo included funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers as a high priority. It's my understanding that \$1.8 million in state dollars would total close to \$4 million with the Medicaid match.

I live in a rural part of the state that struggles to provide affordable health-care access for all Vermonters. The Battenkill Valley Health Center in Arlington serves more than 4,000 patients, practice wide, from 108 towns in Vermont, New York and Massachusetts. Of these, 48 percent are living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. That's why BVHC's sliding fee scale is so important.

BVHC provides medical, dental, mental health, psychiatric, nutrition, nurse case management and substance use disorder services. They also try to meet the needs of our small communities in unique ways, including distributing food in partnership with Veggie Van Go and the local food shelves; handing out more than 3,000 toothbrushes; giving several dozen health presentations in schools and child-care centers; and hosting walking groups, cooking classes, and offering a loaner blood-pressure machine.

Across Vermont, our FQHCs provide primary care to 1 in 3 Vermonters. They are mandated to see patients regardless of ability to pay or insurance status. They are a critical safety net provider, and the services they provide keep health care costs down by keeping patients out of emergency rooms and urgent-care clinics.

This funding ask would help DVHA to better align FQHC rates with their individual costs. Each FQHC should have rates that reflect the reasonable costs of their unique health center and the people it serves. Without this important funding, Battenkill Valley Health Center and Vermont's other FQHCs may need to reduce services, which hurts Vermonters and costs us all.

Thank you for your consideration.

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