

STATEMENT BY MARK REDMOND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPECTRUM YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

2.13.2024

Thank you for inviting me here today, my name is Mark Redmond and I am the executive director of Spectrum Youth and Family Services.

Spectrum has been in existence since 1970 and our primary mission is to work with teenagers and young adults who are homeless or at-risk of become homeless.; We were founded and are still based in Burlington but almost three years ago we received a private donation and a federal grant to create a Drop-In center in St. Albans similar to the one we have had in Burlington. This would be a safe space where youth could come in and receive the basics of a free hot lunch and dinner, clothing, homework help, do laundry, help finding employment

We rented a building on Lake Street in St. A. We originally wrote a grant when we opened stating that we expected to work with approximately 80 different youth in year 1. We instead saw 189 come to us for assistance in that first year and 304 in the last year alone.

The next component we wish to add to our work in St. Albans is shelter and transitional housing. In Burlington, we have 26 beds for youth ages 18-24 who literally have nowhere to live. The average stay is 18 months, during which time they not only have a place to stay, but help with finishing school, finding employment,. This is what we now wish to create in St. Albans. We meet youth age 18 and above in our St. Albans Drop-In Center who are living in cars, garages, tents or abandoned buildings. In cold weather, they may qualify to live temporarily in a hotel, but available rooms are typically very far away in Bennington or Brattleboro. These youth have no way to get there.

Our St. Albans staff estimate that there are 34 youth, ages 17 –23 who could have used emergency shelter in the last year alone. There are about 18 youth who could benefit from such shelter right now. Given that the only adult shelter in St. Albans has 20 beds and is full, with 50 on the waitlist, Spectrum would like to create a youth-specific supportive housing program to meet this critical demand.

I am at this time appealing to your committee for operating funding, in the budget, to continue the work of our Drop-In center in St. Albans for \$200,000 per year and he annual operating costs for a residence will be approximately \$454,000.

Thank you.