

**FY25 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING:
February 20, 2024**

**Supporting Recovery Partners of Vermont budget requests
Melissa Riegel-Garrett; melissarg1970@gmail.com**

Thank you for this time. My name is Melissa Riegel-Garrett, I live in Colchester and I am the past president on the Vermont Foundation of Recovery Board of Directors. VFOR is a member of Recovery Partners of Vermont and I am here today asking for your support for our 2024 budget requests:

- *\$1.5M to the DOC to expand our recovery coach model statewide;*
- *An increase of \$1,559,000 to the current base, for a total of \$3,040,000 to support the expansion of certified Recovery Residences and*
- *As recommended by the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee, \$325,000 from the Opioid Settlement Fund for the Recovery Residence scholarship program.*

At Recovery Residences, the journey to lifelong recovery is paved with hope and concrete supports and services to help people realize their power to stay sober. On Recovery Day many committees heard from Vermonters that their time in recovery residences contributed to them building the recovery capital needed for on-going sobriety. I am one of the thousands of Vermonters whom have family members or close friends impacted by substance use disorder. For me, my brother's on going sobriety means I have a best friend, someone to lean on as we support our aging parents and my children have an uncle who supports them holistically. His sobriety means he is present for all aspects of life and is a contributing member of society. The roots of that sobriety are in the relationships he built in a sober house while he was in early sobriety and I am grateful every day for that.

Having a systems level way of thinking, I support learning more about the need for recovery residences in terms of number of beds, locations of homes and types of supports within the residences. However, evidenced by the number of people on wait lists for VFOR homes and the list of communities seeking to open a home, there is a real need for more recovery residences throughout Vermont right now and immediate investments cannot wait. The current budget request for additional base funding and scholarships will help add additional residences for Vermonters with substance use disorder who need them right now.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share with you my support for the Recovery Partners of Vermont budget requests (see attachment for more details) and I would be happy to provide further testimony at the pleasure of your committees.

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Attachment: Recovery Partners of Vermont FY25 Budget Request handout