



To: Honorable Thomas Zonay, Chair, Coordinated Justice Reform Advisory Council
Monica Weeber, Crime Research Group, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee: Lindy Boudreau, Department for Children and Families,
Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity, Nichols Deml, Department of Corrections
Willa Farrell, Office of the Attorney General, Jennifer Poehlmann, Vermont Center for
Crime Victim Services, Senator Richard Sears, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Representative Trevor Squirrell, House Appropriations Committee

From: Karen Tronsgard-Scott, Executive Director, Vermont Network Against Domestic and
Sexual Violence
Rhoni Basden, Executive Director, Vermont Works for Women
Lisa Falcone, Executive Director, Mercy Connections
Courtney Farrell, Director of Residential and Community Treatment, Lund Center

Date: August 21, 2023

Re: Allocation of \$240,000 per the FY 2024 state budget

Dear Judge Zonay:

On behalf of the Vermont Network's DIVAS program, Vermont Works for Women, Mercy Connections, and the Lund Center, we request that the \$240,952 remaining unallocated funds from the 2024 Vermont state budget be allocated to re-entry services provided by our four organizations.

Re-entry services have long been a priority of Justice Reinvestment I and II. Through both JRI I and II, there was recognition that an investment in re-entry services will serve to reduce the number of justice involved women who return to incarceration because of technical violations like losing housing, losing a job, and/or relapse. Support for re-entry is needed not only to reduce recidivism but to support restoration, community engagement, family reunification and to help women move beyond incarceration and into lives that are meaningful and productive. These funds would allow for the additional resources needed to operationalize a vision for services that start inside the incarcerative setting and add services and supports that follow women into the community. Such services, provided in collaboration with the Department of Corrections, would lay the foundation for the longer-term vision for a new approach to incarceration using the Maine model for a transitional unit.

In 2022 we asked the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee to allocate \$400,000 for these services. On December 11, 2022, the Oversight Committee responded to our request: "... While the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee is authorized to approve these funds, it decided to instead recommend a priority use of the funds in this year's budget. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that your committees prioritize spending the money on **transitional**

services and discharge planning for individuals in the custody of the Department of Corrections who are subject to medication-assisted treatment. The Committee feels that prioritizing the expenditure of the remaining funds this will assist these individuals as they transition back into the community and supports Justice Reinvestment II initiatives.”

We respectfully request that the Coordinated Justice Reform Advisory Council consider honoring the intent of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee and allocate these funds to support re-entry services.

CC: Rhoni Basden, Vermont Works for Women
Lisa Falcone, Mercy Connections
Courtney Farrell, Lund Center
Sarah Robinson, Vermont Network