

My name is Donna Savage. I am a lifelong Vermonter currently residing in Williston, VT where I have lived with my husband and children for the past 20 years. I am a member of the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI), along with approximately 100 other caring Vermont parents who have an adult child with an intellectual and/or developmental disability diagnosis (I/DD), most of whom have significant support needs.

My 22 year old son has intensive, life-long disabilities which require 24/7 support and care. He is both profoundly deaf and visually impaired, developmentally delayed, cognitively impaired, and non-verbal with limited other language skills. On an everyday basis my son needs help with all activities of daily living (ADL), inclusive of diapering, food preparation and feeding, communication, transportation, and medication administration. When my husband and I will no longer be able to provide this 24/7 care for him, our son will need a safe, structured, *permanent* home where people would share in his care and, ideally, be part of a community of friends -- perhaps friends he has known throughout his school years and through his many years of participation in VT Special Olympics.

Please support our request for \$10.82M for implementation of the 3 Pilot Grant Projects, established by Act 186, to develop new and innovative housing options for this vulnerable population. Please also support the continued annual development of service supported housing for adults with I/DD. We will need help securing essential funding through loans and grants from state housing programs, as well as from the state funding for permanent Affordable Housing. The Act 186 pilots will provide homes for roughly 30 of our children, but according to the VT Developmental Disability Council's 2023 Housing Brief, the current need in our state is roughly **600 new units** - so our Pilot Grant Projects are truly just the beginning. Please help us create the crucial pipeline of funding for the development of stable, service-supported housing for adults with I/DD that will ensure safe homes for them, and friends to live with long after their parents are gone.

Since the Brandon Training School closed over 30 years ago, our sons and daughters have been left out of the equation for REAL housing choices in Vermont. Since the date of its closure in 1993, there's been little money invested by the State in service-supported housing for adults with I/DD. Our population of Vermonters needs to be recognized as being in *dire need* of housing, and we're looking to the state to live up to its assurances upon Brandon's closure that these vulnerable individuals and their families would continue to receive the services and supports it needed. That did not and is not happening.

Let's turn this around!

Again, please support the DDHI's request for \$10.82M to get the 3 Pilot Grant Projects off the ground. Vermont's most vulnerable citizens will be forever grateful to you for it.

Sincerely,

Donna & Patrick Savage (on behalf of our son Jack Savage)