

Margaret Talbot - 2025 Budget Testimony
Empty Arms Vermont- (mramsdentalbot@gmail.com)

Thank you for giving me the chance to speak this afternoon. My name is Margaret Talbot and I live in Burlington with my husband and son.

I am here testifying today to advocate for funding for Empty Arms Vermont, an organization that provides peer support for families whose babies have died through miscarriage, stillbirth, early infant loss, or termination of a pregnancy for medical reasons. Please support Empty Arms' request for \$40,000 in one-time funds.

Before my living son, Henry, was born in September 2023, my husband and I had years of challenges in our journey to starting a family. I have had 4 miscarriages in the last three years.

While pregnancy and infant loss impacts 1 in 4 pregnancies, recurrent miscarriages are much more rare. *The isolation and stigma I felt with each additional miscarriage was overwhelming.* These years were the darkest period of my life. After my third miscarriage, I reached out to Empty Arms, looking for support.

Over the last two years, I have attended multiple support groups through the different phases of my journey to my living son. While I could speak at length about the benefits of Empty Arms peer support groups, I want to emphasize the following.

- **Empty Arms Peer support groups provide a unique opportunity to connect with others who have shared experiences in Vermont.** Finding others who had experienced recurrent miscarriages and others who had wrestled with the deeply personal decision to have a termination for medical reasons like we had was critical to processing my medical trauma.
- **Empty Arms support groups provide a way for peers to validate varying emotions without fear of judgment-** including anxiety, frustration, fear, deep sadness, anger, guilt- or maybe feelings of being left behind by peers, or processing situations with well-meaning friends or family. While these emotions can be shared with medical providers, discussions with peers processing together was critical to my healing.
- **Finally, groups provide critical space to grieve together.** I found solace in connecting with others who knew the deep pain I was experiencing. I believe the support the groups provided ultimately buoyed me on my path to having my now 5 month old son.

I have found deep community and comfort in the peer support groups that Empty Arms has facilitated. These support groups are filling a critical need in the state- which is not being met by our traditional medical system. I ask for your support in this one time funding request.