

I am emailing this for your consideration as the Senate and House committees on Housing begin their deliberations. We moved to Vermont from NY 16 years ago primarily to support our daughter who is a retired State employee and now a single loving and brave Mom who is raising her 2 children including her 20 y/o autistic son with severe developmental disabilities. During Covid when educational services stopped, the challenge was daunting because of how much he was deprived and regressed in the absence of the stimulation of learning, social interaction, physical activities and routine. Once he returned, because of short staffing and other problems the school system could not offer him more than 2 days /week. The toll on my daughter and her teenage daughter was enormous and alarming. With huge effort from his combined caregivers, he was accepted into the Easter Seal Program in New Hampshire. Our fear that he would not transition and leave home was so misguided. He entered Easter Seal with unexpected enthusiasm and has been prospering ever since. As you deliberate about housing funding, please consider the options currently available to developmentally disabled kids who are reaching adult age and their families in the state of Vermont. Shared living would be a sentence for people like my grandson because well intentioned participants who provide foster care for one or two people in their homes are not trained or skilled and lack programmatic support.

Joe Messina