

Dear Senator Lyons,

I am a constituent from Williston and the parent/guardian of our 25 year old son with an intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD). I am also a member of the Developmental Disability Housing Initiative. Our group of 100+ families from around the state are advocating for:

1. Language to be added to Senate Bill S100 - Section 42 to ***“Provide supported housing for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.”*** Given the affordable housing funding in VT available today, we need to have set asides to establish the norm for funding service supported housing for people with developmental disabilities.
2. **Support for a 10% Medicaid Rate increase for Developmental Services to reduce our staffing crisis.** I have shared with you prior that we are without any Community Supports for the last 10 months, as well as other services my son is budgeted for due to staffing shortages experienced by DA’s/SSA’s. Parents are carrying the burden of this staffing crisis and we are uncertain how long we can maintain what we provide today. We fully understand the direct support professional staffing challenges the DA’s/SSA’s are faced with and are grateful for the 8% raise and additional program funding approved in the last legislative session that stopped the exiting of DSP workers, but vacancies remain at 24% in Developmental Disabilities staffing and the increase has only kept up with inflation. In addition, the need for developing service supported housing, will require a stable, professional, qualified and trained workforce of caregivers, which is not available today.
3. **Support for an annualized rate review for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS),** which is done in other Health sectors (i.e. nursing homes, health care, hospitals, etc.) to ensure a livable wage and encourage recruitment and retention of direct support professionals. ***Direct Support Professionals are a valued essential worker for my son and family*** and Developmental Services has been underfunded for way too long.

In closing, **DDHI is asking for the opportunity to come and give testimony to the *Senate Committee on Health and Welfare*** about our adult children’s needs. When the Brandon Training School closed in 1993, the state assured families that our disabled adult children would be adequately supported. Unfortunately, that is not the case today and the needs of this vulnerable population must be addressed.

Thank you for your service and consideration of these asks and I look forward to hearing from you.

-Jenn Townley