

## **Testimony to House Energy and Environment**

February 8, 2024, by Thomas Longstreth, ReSOURCE Executive Director

Thank you for allowing me to give a brief overview of ReSOURCE and explanation of the impact that legislative funding of SLE has had on our workforce training programs. We are not just teaching construction skills to disadvantaged people who need work, but through this training, building affordable housing, weatherizing homes, and this past year especially, responding to natural disasters.

As you know, last year was the warmest on record. The solution to this accelerating disaster is to put more people to work building resiliency and transitioning our economy and infrastructure away from fossil fuels.

### **You may already be familiar with ReSOURCE:**

--4 reuse stores, statewide training programs, and we support >30 sister NGOs through Essential Goods Program --the 3 components of our mission-- Environmental, poverty relief, and training—are interconnected. Use Synergies btw. --we help trainees advance regardless of skill level through 3 program categories --work experience, workforce development, and registered apprenticeship. Workforce Development is funded by SLE. --Trainees learn but also support other goals by relieving poverty and protecting the environment. This Public good is measured by units of housing produced, buildings weatherized, and other improvements to public facilities.

### **State support of SLE has allowed two of our workforce development programs to expand to meet statewide need:**

**Intensives:** 6-week long training for adults

-collaboration with employers with need for skilled workers  
-Construction 101, Weatherization 101, HVAC + new pilots

- 17 cohorts planned in every region of state, >120 trainees
- 100% of graduates earning credential, >90% placement, >\$20/hr average starting wage

### **YouthBuild:**

- 16 to 24 year-old. Dropouts or at-risk.
- Barre and Burlington. Exploring addition 2 new sites.
- YB Strong results: credential attainment, skills and confidence, 95% placement into jobs with high demand.

YouthBuild has had major role in disaster recovery.

Flood victims, even if they have insurance or qualify for SBA loan, are struggling to find skilled construction help. To solve both cost and availability problems, ReSOURCE is adding two new construction crews that will do flood rebuilding and have 4 crews working in multiple flood damaged communities.

### **ReSOURCE's training programs have multiple beneficiaries:**

1. Trainees gain high skills. Gain credentials & confidence. Become gainfully employed. Are able to support their families through meaningful work in high demand industries.
2. Employers gain skilled employees and are able to expand businesses
3. Vermont public: ReSOURCE and SLE complete critical state priorities. Some of this work is done by newly employed graduates working at growing construction businesses, but ReSOURCE is also building housing and repairing flood ravaged buildings directly through training programs.

### **Two recent examples from just completed HVAC Intensive:**

**Kyle:** Suffered a stroke. He had to relearn how to walk and talk. He enrolled in HVAC Intensive to become gainfully employed. He did not want to remain dependent on SSI. Through ReSOURCE's HVAC Intensive, Kyle obtained key certifications and is now working for Vermont Heating making over \$23/hr.

**Lydia:** Enrolled but failed to complete prior training programs. Struggled with many of same challenges that impact other low income and marginally employed Vermonters. Through the training, she not only gained technical skills, but also overcame prior attendance problems and emerged with new reputation for timeliness and reliability. She completed a job shadow with VHV and is now employed there.

**To Conclude:**

1. Both the Governor and Legislature have prioritized Workforce Training. Not possible to achieve other state priorities without skilled workers.
2. Shortage of workers is structural. Solution must include training that allows out of work people to overcome barriers and become gainfully employed.
3. Programs supported by Serve Learn Earn funding are achieving strong impact and return on investment (higher tax revenue, lower public support costs).

Programs such as ours are critically important.

1. recruit and train brand new workers,
2. agile & entrepreneurial, aligned with employer needs
3. Service learning is a powerful model. Multiple benefits that extend far beyond immediate workforce impacts.

Thank you.