

# To the members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs and the House Committee on General and Housing-

Hello. My name is Laurie Mumley. I live in Shelburne, Vermont. I'm writing to you today to offer comment in advance of today's Public Hearing on Housing as I am unable to attend.

I'm a 1987 UVM graduate who has been retired from the Agency of Human Services for over four years-I am well aware of the scope of housing needs in Vermont. I am also the single parent to two children. My son, Joey, is 20 years old. He is fun-loving, charming, and has an amazing singing voice. He is also minimally verbal, autistic, and requires a high level of care.

Vermont schools were unable to provide him what he needs. Although I never wanted my son to live three hours away from me, in a completely different state, he is currently in an out of state residential educational placement. I drive there each week to visit him. Each month, I bring him home for a visit. My car has high mileage (135,000) and I can't replace it at this point. It's challenging having him so far away from home. He loves his school, and is thriving there. However, he will age out of that program next year. I am worried that he will regress if he doesn't have appropriate local options. I am even more worried about his future when I am no longer able to advocate for him, and after I am dead.

Right now in Vermont, adults with Developmental Disabilities and significant support needs have basically two housing options-

1. Remaining with their aging parents until the parents die or are physically no longer able to provide even minimal care or
2. Shared Living (which is basically adult foster care-with virtually no oversight). Foster care is NOT a permanent home and doesn't offer the kind of routine and predictability that my son (and others!) need and deserve. In any case, no one or two person home can provide him with the type of peer interactions, stability, safety, structure, supervision, and engaging activities that he needs.

There are a few scattered group homes in the state. The few that exist serve specific populations, primarily those that have lower support needs. **None** serve developmentally delayed adults like my son (with significant support needs). Medicaid covers the cost of their services. HUD needs to cover their housing. We don't even need to develop the "models" for appropriate housing-they have long existed in other states. In addition, the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) Parent group that I am part of has compiled a report on appropriate housing models-ANY of which could work for my son.

The fact is, when the Brandon Training School shut down in 1993, promises were made by the State and have not been kept. The community programs (day programs, work programs, and

HOUSING) STILL do not broadly exist (**thirty years later**) and the growing Developmental Disabilities community has been ignored and underfunded these past few decades. We are frighteningly behind.

As his parent, guardian and sole caregiver, I have been exhausted and overwhelmed for years caring for my son, and advocating for his needs. I would like to slow down..... and yet my son has no voice but mine. And so, I advocate for him and for the other adults like him.

I am asking that, as you explore the housing needs in Vermont (which I realize are many), **please prioritize our most vulnerable population!** They need our help NOW.

I am more than happy to provide more detailed testimony or answer your questions. Please let me know if you'd like to know more.

Thank you,

Laurie Mumley

Below is a picture of my son and I at my weekly visit on 2/15/23

