

Good afternoon, my name is Sarah Launderville and I am the executive director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living which is a member of the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights. VCIL and VCDR is in support of S.176.

As you heard in John's testimony, VCIL administers a grant program for low income Vermonters who have physical disabilities. The program has been in existence since 1983 and provides entrance and bathroom modifications. We have chosen to prioritize bathroom and entrance modifications because the number of applicants the program receives annually outweighs the funding available.

The Home Access Program is funded through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA funding has been for specific regions, most recently serving counties in the Northeast Kingdom as well as Franklin, Orange and Washington counties.

At this time there are 64 people on the HAP waiting list. The wait time for individuals applying today is approximately two years. There is only two exceptions in which an individual can move ahead of others and that is if the person is at risk of going into a nursing home, or if they have leveraged funding for the project. HAP staff work with individuals who apply to the program to identify other funding sources and work very closely with the Homeownership Centers throughout the state, the Choices for Care Program, MS Society and other organizations that have small grants that can go towards a home modification.

The 64 people on the HAP waiting list range in age from 28-95.

Breakout of own/rent/mobile home:

Own home & land	Rents	Owns Mobile home/Rents land
27	22	15

Below is a breakout of applicants by county:

County	# of HAP applicants
Addison	4
Bennington	7
Caledonia	2
Chittenden	3
Essex	2
Franklin	14
Grand Isle	1
Lamoille	2
Orange	2
Orleans	4
Rutland	11
Washington	4
Windham	4
Windsor	4
TOTAL	64

The Home Access Program has income guidelines for eligibility. Within a household the income cannot exceed 80% of the HUD Median income. The chart below explains the amount of income limits for a household based on the number of people within that household. For example someone living in Addison County and has a household that includes one person, the income cannot exceed \$41,100 to be eligible for the program.

HAP Program Income Limits by Number of People in Household								
County	One Person	Two People	Three People	Four People	Five People	Six People	Seven People	Eight People
Addison	\$41,100	\$46,950	\$52,800	\$58,650	\$63,350	\$68,050	\$72,750	\$77,450
Bennington	\$36,250	\$41,400	\$46,600	\$51,750	\$55,900	\$60,050	\$64,200	\$68,350
Caledonia	\$36,250	\$41,400	\$46,600	\$51,750	\$55,900	\$60,050	\$64,200	\$68,350
Chittenden	\$45,850	\$52,400	\$58,950	\$65,500	\$70,750	\$76,000	\$81,250	\$86,500
Essex	\$36,250	\$41,400	\$46,600	\$51,750	\$55,900	\$60,050	\$64,200	\$68,350
Franklin	\$45,850	\$52,400	\$58,950	\$65,500	\$70,750	\$76,000	\$81,250	\$86,500
Grand Isle	\$45,850	\$52,400	\$58,950	\$65,500	\$70,750	\$76,000	\$81,250	\$86,500
Lamoille	\$38,450	\$43,950	\$49,450	\$54,900	\$59,300	\$63,700	\$68,100	\$72,500
Orange	\$37,450	\$42,800	\$48,150	\$53,450	\$57,750	\$62,050	\$66,300	\$70,600

HAP Program Income Limits by Number of People in Household

County	One Person	Two People	Three People	Four People	Five People	Six People	Seven People	Eight People
Orleans	\$36,250	\$41,400	\$46,600	\$51,750	\$55,900	\$60,050	\$64,200	\$68,350
Rutland	\$36,800	\$42,050	\$47,300	\$52,550	\$56,800	\$61,000	\$65,200	\$69,400
Washington	\$41,400	\$47,300	\$53,200	\$59,100	\$63,850	\$68,600	\$73,300	\$78,050
Windham	\$36,700	\$41,950	\$47,200	\$52,400	\$56,600	\$60,800	\$65,000	\$69,200
Windsor	\$41,000	\$46,850	\$52,700	\$58,550	\$63,250	\$67,950	\$72,650	\$77,300

The Home Access Program receives approximately two calls per month from individuals who are not eligible for the program because their household income exceeds the program income limits. The chart listed above is also on the VCIL website, so some individuals may look at the income thresholds and not make a call to the program at all.

VCIL administers another program called the Sue Williams Freedom Fund (SWFF) that is a grant program that pays for up to \$1,500 in assistive technology. The SWFF grant can be used as a partial payment on modifications in the household that are not entrance and bathroom modifications. The funding for the Sue Williams Freedom fund comes from federal funds administered by the VT State Independent Living Council (SILC), and private donations.

Based on data from the past year, VCIL spends on average \$10,000 per household on entrance and bathroom modifications. Below is a chart of the average cost of home modification by type:

Type of Modification	Estimated Cost
Ramp	\$8,000
Bathroom	\$12,000
Stair Glide	\$10,000
Small device modification	\$1,000
Kitchen modification	\$25,000
Accessible walkway	\$15,000

These averages include the labor of a professional contractor, meaning the cost will vary depending on if the household uses volunteer labor to complete a project.

VCIL believes that having a tax-credit for people who can pay to have their home modified will benefit those in need of a home modification, and others.

VCIL appreciates the language on line 19-20 of the bill “so that an individual with a disability or physical hardship may visit”. For years VCIL has advocated for more housing stock to be accessible so individuals have access in their own homes, or age in place but also be able to visit the homes of others. When the “visitability” bill passed VCIL was encouraged that the accessible and adaptable housing stock in the state would increase.

VCIL has read and is also in support of S.24.

VCIL has developed a work plan for all of our programs using the Results Based Accountability model. We are in the beginning stages of using this evaluation tool.

In the work plan below we identified the goal of “accessible and adaptable housing stock in the state of Vermont will increase” and you can see from the work plan how the Home Access Program hopes to help meet that indicator.

Home Access Program

Customers:

- Peers with permanent physical disabilities who need home modifications to inhabit the dwelling or would be housebound if the modifications were not made
- VHCB
- USDA
- Contractors
- Access Consultants
- RSVP, Cover volunteer organizations
- 5 Homeownership Centers

The Home Access Program is responsible for:

- Providing home access modifications for eligible low-income Vermonters.

How Much (quantity of efforts)	How Well (quality of efforts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Contractor training • Develop/maintain relationships with all Homeownership Centers through regular contact (# meetings?) • Determine eligibility for all new applicants through income verification and Doctor confirmation of permanent physical disability • Track and maintain waiting list, working list, project financial log, and individual files • Contact peers weekly throughout the project • Complete at least <u>46</u> vhcw projects, <u>1</u> usda fow project, <u>8</u> usda nek projects • Work with Peer Advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer closing evaluation package • Contractor training evaluations • HAP staff provide service in a timely manner (includes returning phone calls, e-mails, application review, and grantor reports) • All projects will be completed within 30 days after construction begins • The maximum length on the waiting list will be 24 months. • Score at least ___% on customer satisfaction with program.

to help peers identify leveraged funding opportunities

- Outreach to Potential peers in the NEK
- Attend VT Affordable Housing meetings
- Attend VHCB bi-annual housing conference
- Determine what existing baseline data will be used for RBA purposes including # on waiting list, # of applicants, customer satisfaction %, quality of contractor work (from final inspection)
- Determine what other baseline data should be collected and determine how it will be obtained

Is anyone better off? (Effects)

- Accessible and adaptable housing stock in the state of Vermont will increase
- Accessible low income housing stock was increased by #/%
- Increased awareness of the program and need for accessible housing for Organizations, Leveraged funders and potential peers throughout the state
- Contractors are trained on disability etiquette and best practices for home access modifications
- More people can bathe independently #/%
- More people can get out of their homes & participate in their communities #/%

Story Behind Performance Baselines: TBD

Strategy & Action to Improve Performance

- Outreach to determine need in NEK & educate potential peers and partners about the program
- Work with partners to determine if new construction projects are complying with laws and/or if waivers are being granted to avoid building accessible units
- Review and follow-up on results of survey

According to the DAIL Results Based Accountability Scorecard <https://app.resultsscorecard.com/Scorecard/Embed/8865> released in the DAIL FY2015 Annual Report there are indicators related to home accessibility that we believe this bill can help show positive results.

Indicators include:

- Percentage of Vermonters age 60+ served by Choices for Care who were in a Home and Community Based setter rather than a nursing facility.
- Fall-related death rate per 100,000 adults age 65 and older
- Number of Choices for Care Home and Community Based participants who are satisfied with their contact with family and friends. (this number decreased by 1% in 2015)

We know that after the “visitability” bill passed new construction residential homes were to meet adaptability standards as stated in S.24, but tracking if that is actually happening is an issue. We hear stories which lead us to believe that builders/developers are not complying with the law.

Through our work we also hear from individuals with disabilities that they are not often able to visit their family and friends because the homes of people they are visiting are not accessible. If we begin to collect the data outlined in S.24 we will be able to address where we need to put more energy and education into the existing law and make positive strides in indicators identified by the state and those working on improving the housing stock available to people with disabilities, elders and their families and friends.

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