

Testimony on behalf of NeighborWorks of Western Vermont  
February 13, 2017

To: Representative Catherine Toll, Chair  
House Committee on Appropriations

My name is Caroline Schneider. As a resident of Rutland, VT, and a board member of NeighborWorks for five years, I would like to add my strong endorsement to NeighborWorks' request for a \$250,000 state funding appropriation to expand its "HEAT Squad" program to all counties of Vermont, from the existing five southwestern counties it now serves.

The HEAT Squad program began in 2010 with a \$4.5 million grant from the US Dept. of Energy. It has provided 3,500 households in Addison, Rutland, Bennington, Windham, and Windsor counties audits of their heat loss that have also resulted in 1,400 households retrofitting their homes, for significant fuel savings.

The audits and retrofits have not only significantly reduced energy consumption, they have also resulted in a measurable 24% reduction in area asthma symptoms. The HEAT Squad model has developed a comprehensive service program that includes extensive customer services for homeowners: education, low cost energy audits, objective advice, referrals to trusted contractors, in house lending options for low interest loans for retrofitting, and access to state rebate opportunities. Energy efficiency advice from HEAT squad-trained, local contractors covers lighting, appliances, air leakage and insulation, heating equipment, including new options, like heat pump technology, solar, hot water systems, and necessary building improvements.

The program has been so successful that it has been recognized nationally, and at least one other state, Kentucky, is working with the HEAT Squad to adopt the same measures in its state.

Our HEAT Squad has been particularly effective in assisting low income families in our communities. And with education, it has been shown that such households are more than 150% more likely to install efficiency measures in their homes when assisted by HEAT Squad members, compared to private contractors. The program has been a win for the families it serves, but has also been a win for the local contractors it has trained, bringing \$9,000,000 in contractor revenue to them in the past six years.

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Committee Testimony by Caroline Schneider, NeighborWorks Board

The board of NeighborWorks joins the customers we serve, our staff, and the contractors we employ in asking you to consider our request. The modest appropriation of \$250,000 by the state can result in the effective expansion of this valuable program to the entire state, ensuring that we continue to save money on fuel, have healthier homes, and provide important employment for the contractors living in and serving our communities.

If you have additional questions, I will be most happy to provide any information that may prove useful to you.

Respectfully submitted,



Caroline Schneider, Secretary of the Board Directors  
of NeighborWorks of Western Vermont