

To: Senator Jane Kitchel and Representative Catherine Toll, Chairs
Senate and House Committees on Appropriations, and
Committee Members

From: Kathleen Allen, Vice President of Board of Directors,
NeighborWorks of Western Vermont

Date: February 15, 2017

This written testimony is submitted in support of the request of NeighborWorks of Western Vermont for an appropriation of \$250,000 in the budget being considered for 2017.

With so many budget demands, I urge you to consider NeighborWorks' request for funding to expand its home energy audit and upgrade program. This relatively small allocation of state monies will do the following: 1. make a significant difference in energy efficiency in the households in the state, 2. improve family health, 3. enable families to save money on heating costs, and 4. provide significant labor training and work opportunities for Vermont contractors.

With initial funding from the US Department of Energy in 2010, NeighborWorks was able to provide thousands of energy audits in the five counties it has traditionally served: Addison, Rutland, Bennington, Windham, and Windsor counties. And it provided 1,400 households with retrofitted homes, resulting in significant fuel savings. The \$250,000 appropriation will enable the NeighborWorks specialized staff, dubbed "the HEAT squad," to provide their services to residents of the entire state of Vermont. The HEAT Squad's trained local contractors will provide advice and upgrades in lighting, appliances, air leakage and insulation, heating equipment (including heat pumps, solar and hot water systems) and necessary building improvements. Fossil fuel consumption, carbon dioxide emissions, and asthma symptoms have all been measurably reduced in the five county area presently served by the work of the HEAT Squad, while \$9,000,000 has been generated for its trained contractors during the same period. And the need for the same types of skills is continually growing in the state.

The Vermont State Treasurer's office already provides support to this program by offering lending capital, which is repaid by the borrower through an add-on to their monthly Green Mountain Power utility bill. All Vermont households have access to these loans through our program at 0% – 4.99% interest rates.

We would be more than happy to provide additional client testimonials and relevant data to the committee to detail the extraordinary impact that the

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HEAT Squad has had on Vermont households and for Vermont contractors. The program has been recognized nationally, and, we hope, will also be recognized by the legislature, by providing the funding needed to extend it to the underserved counties of our state.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Allen,
Vice-President of NeighborWorks Board of Directors