

**Home Access Program
Vermont Center for Independent Living
House Appropriations Testimony
February 14, 2018**

Good morning. My name is Patricia Tedesco. I coordinate the Home Access Program at the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL). I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today, as well as your long standing support for this program throughout many years of budget challenges.

The Home Access Program provides accessibility modifications for Vermonters who have permanent physical disabilities. This means building a ramp or making a bathroom accessible so people can remain in their homes and live more independently.

Along with the peers we work with and VCIL staff, I want to thank you for your past support of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB). This is our primary funding source.

We request you fund VHCB at the highest level possible this year. VHCB's FY 18 funding level required by statute is estimated at \$20.4 million from the Property Transfer Tax. I know you are dealing with another difficult budget year, but full funding for VHCB would help provide additional housing for people with disabilities, as well.

Currently the average cost of a home modification through our program is about \$10,000. We increased leverage funding from multiple sources which has reduced the average amount of VHCB dollars to \$4,004 per project. Meanwhile, it cost about \$97,000 a year to live in a nursing home, so clearly HAP is saving the State money in the Human Services budget.

Last year we were able to complete 84 projects (including 46 bath modifications and 27 ramps). However, right now we have 47 people on our waiting list – some of them have been waiting for two years.

We are primarily using a modular ramp systems which generally cost less than wooden ramps, they go up in a day and require little maintenance overtime. They also give people more options - especially if they need to move to a new location.

Local economies throughout the state benefit from this funding as well because contractors receive a livable wage and purchase materials from local suppliers.

With the traditional funding levels of \$425,000 to \$475,000 from VHCB and \$100,000 from the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, VCIL's Home Access Program is able to provide about 70 home modifications a year. With \$ 200,000 in additional funding this year through VHCB's \$37 million revenue bond, we estimate that we will be able to provide 20 additional home modifications this year, which will help a lot by further reducing our lengthy waiting list.

Since the Home Access Program funding depends in large part on VHCB's appropriation, we ask you to provide them with full statutory funding, but certainly no less than the Governor's recommended level funding at \$16.3 million.

I've submitted a packet to each of you which includes data from last year and some photographs of projects. Thank you for your time, I know you have difficult decisions to make.

Submitted by Patricia Tedesco
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BEFORE



AFTER

Town: Hardwick

Peer age: 76

County: Caledonia County

Owns home; 38.33% HUD median income

"My bathroom was a disaster, rotten floors. Bathtub had hole in it, not accessible for ambulance to get me out. Before I received the bathroom modification I was not able to keep myself as clean as I like. I was afraid of falling through the floor."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$7,591.06 (funding for ramp and bathroom)

Leveraged funds: \$7,494.72 (USDA 504 loan/grant program)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: Rutland

Peer age: 63

County: Rutland County

Rents home; 22.44% HUD median income

"I live in an apartment in Rutland, Vermont, and there (were) wooden steps and I have to use a walker and I use oxygen tanks in a portable carrier. It was extremely difficult to enter and exit my apartment... Now that I have a ramp, I can enter and exit my apartment by walking down my ramp and my son does not have to lift my walker and oxygen tank down the wooden steps and then help me down the steps which in bad weather was more difficult."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$9,706.82

Leveraged funds: \$1,000.00 (Vermont Eastern Star Homes \$800, American Legion \$200)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: St. Albans

Peer age: 63

County: Franklin County

Owns home; 35.6% HUD median income

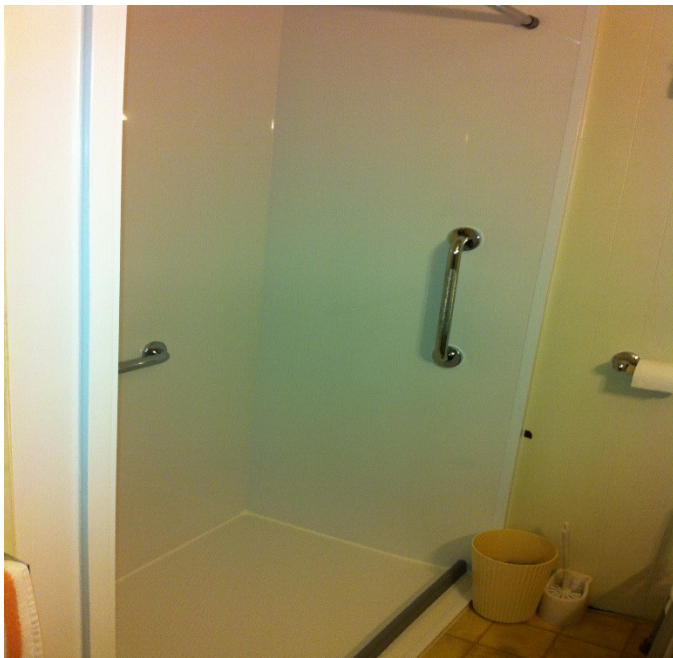
"My dream has been fulfilled by VCIL and the modification of my bathroom has enabled me to shower daily without the fear of falling. ... VCIL has made it possible for me to remain independent in my home."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$8,456.89

Leveraged funds: \$0 (peer was on wait list for two years)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: Burlington

Peer age: 74

County: Chittenden County

Rents home; 23.5% HUD median income

"Before I received my bathroom modification, I had to lift my leg up over the tub. (It) was an inconvenience and painful at times. Now I can walk in my shower easily and without pain in my hip."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$5,061.00

Leveraged funds: \$3,766.00 (Peer \$2,000, Bath Fitter discount \$1,766)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: Lincoln

Peer age: 67

County: Addison County

Owns home; 32.9% HUD median income

"Before I received the bathroom modification I had to use the commode in the night and now I use the toilet. (It) makes me feel good to be on my own. I am not such a pest to my husband and my kids. ... Thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$4,842.19

Leveraged funds: \$9,007.81 (USDA 504 grant \$7,500, internal USDA 2016 statewide grant \$1,507.81)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: North Clarendon

Peer age: 60

County: Rutland County

Owns home; 39.89% HUD median income

"Now that I have a ramp I can walk freely without "occasional" – rarely – pain. I feel now liberated in that the fear and what felt like pathetic maneuvers to accomplish getting in and out of my house are gone, which makes leaving and returning to my home more desirable than the dread before."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$10,156.38

Leveraged funds: \$1,250.00 (Carris Corporation \$1,000, church \$250)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: Weathersfield

Peer age: 90

County: Windsor County

Owns home; 42.3% HUD median income

"Now that I have a ramp, I can go out (and) sit in the sun, get out for rides, I can exercise and enjoy myself so much more. The world is beautiful out there."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$1,289.31

Leveraged funds: \$2,875.00 (value of 95 hours of volunteer labor from COVER Home Repair)



BEFORE



AFTER

Town: South Royalton

Peer age: 68

County: Windsor County

Owns home; 41.9% HUD median income

"I live in an apartment in Rutland, Vermont, and there (were) wooden steps and I have to use a walker and I use oxygen tanks in a portable carrier. It was extremely difficult to enter and exit my apartment... Now that I have a ramp, I can enter and exit my apartment by walking down my ramp and my son does not have to lift my walker and oxygen tank down the wooden steps and then help me down the steps which in bad weather was more difficult."

VCIL (VHCB) funds: \$1,360.33

Leveraged funds: \$1,348.00 (value of 74 hours of volunteer labor from COVER Home Repair)