



April 19, 2018

Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Chairwoman Ayer and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in front of your committee. Special Olympics Vermont is part of a global movement that works year-round to foster inclusion and acceptance of people with developmental disabilities by using the power of sport to showcase their gifts and abilities.

I am Stephen Contompasis MD, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics at the University of Vermont, and I am proud to serve on the Board of Directors for Special Olympics Vermont and as their volunteer Director of Health and Safety.

I have practiced in Vermont since 1991 as a pediatric specialist in developmental disabilities, diagnosing and treating children with developmental disabilities. I have been involved in clinical, training, and leadership programs through my role as a physician educator at the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine and as the director of a large interdisciplinary federal training grant serving children and families with developmental disabilities. Through these activities it has been a blessing to see these children growing up in a state where, in general, they are well supported, but it is discouraging to see them continue to suffer from significant health disparities.

Data from our Healthy Athletes program clearly demonstrates the health disparity that people with developmental disabilities experience compared to the general population. Globally, on a team of ten Special Olympics athletes, six are overweight or obese, four have untreated tooth decay, and three fail routine hearing tests. Simply put, people with developmental disabilities are not getting the healthcare they are entitled to. One potential reason is that providers are not trained to treat people with developmental disabilities. Over half of medical school deans and students stated that graduates are “not competent” to treat people with developmental disabilities. Until we address these issues the health inequity people with developmental disabilities face will only continue to grow.

Special Olympics International has stepped in, becoming the largest global public health organization specifically for people with developmental disabilities, having provided more than 1.9 million examinations to Special Olympics athletes worldwide. Though these exam, Special Olympics has trained more than 120,000 health care professionals in 130 countries how to treat people with developmental disabilities.

Special Olympics Vermont

16 Gregory Drive, Suite 2, South Burlington, VT 05403, USA **Tel** +1 802 863 5222 **Fax** +1 802 863 3911

www.specialolympicsvermont.org **Email** info@vtso.org **Twitter** @sovt

Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities



Here in Vermont, Special Olympics Vermont provides over 550 health examinations each year in the disciplines of audiology, optometry, dentistry, physical therapy, and health promotion and chronic disease prevention. We are proud to be part of the inclusive health movement, creating a healthier community for all Vermonters. In addition to the health exams, Special Olympics Vermont strives to improve access to adequate health care. Through the Special Olympics International (SOI) Healthy Communities initiative, we are partners with SOI working to addressing the severe health disparity faced by people with developmental disabilities by offering short term solutions through our exams and finding long-term, sustainable solutions through community partnerships.

I also urge you to support the House version of the proposed budget, as it includes vital resources for people with developmental disabilities. Thank you again for your time and listening to our testimony today.

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Contompasis, MD
Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics, University of Vermont
Special Olympics Vermont Board of Directors