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**Subject: VT Psychiatric Care Hospital & Construction Of Additional 16 Level 1 Beds In A State Owned Facility**

Dear Madam Chair:

VSEA requests that if your committee moves forward with the UVMCMC Proposal and the Brattleboro Retreat "bailout" proposal, that it also do the following:

1. convert the VPCH in Berlin into a 16 bed secure residential facility, or keep it as a 16 bed Level 1.
2. If you maintain Level 1 hospital beds at VPCH in Berlin, then build a 16 bed secure residential facility in central Vermont.

**We believe 16 Level 1 beds should be under state control because it creates a safety net, accepting the sickest patients discharged by other hospitals. Since closure of the VSH in Waterbury, other hospitals including UVM transfer the sickest patients to the VPCH.**

**If the Middlesex secure residential patients are transferred to Brattleboro, you will lose the highly trained 31 staff positions at the Middlesex facility. (Please note that when the Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury was closed due to flooding, highly experienced staff dissipated, and the status at trouble recruiting qualified psychiatric workers since that time.)**

**The psychiatric staff at the VPCH are highly trained and are crisis prevention certified.**

**VPCH in Berlin.**

The existing VPCH in Berlin is a \$36M building that is not a hardened building, and there is an extremely well training psychiatric staff at that facility. There is a big demand for that building and the staff there.

During a recent tour of the facility and in meetings with staff there, I learned that there are a number of patients who remain there because there are no "step down" beds for patients who don't need hospital care, but cannot be safely returned into the community.

**Level 1, 16 bed facility.**

There is a demand for a state owned facility. We understand UVM and other hospitals have been sending their sickest patients to the VPCH. A state owned facility would allow the state to continue to accept these difficult patients.

It would ease the pressure on hospitals that continue to care for mental health patients in emergency rooms and hallways of their facilities.

Thank you.

EH