

## Theresa Utton-Jerman

---

**Subject:** FW: In Support of VT Network budget line in 2021 budget

**From:** Sarah Henshaw

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 11, 2020 8:18 PM

**Subject:** In Support of VT Network budget line in 2021 budget

As a survivor of sexual violence, and the Chair of the Clarina Howard Nichols Center in Lamoille County, I am writing in support of the \$500,000 budget request in the Governor's budget for the VT Network and its member organizations. As you are aware, the VT Network and its member partners, including Clarina Howard Nichols Center, provide safety and support for domestic, sexual and trafficking survivors who are in Vermont. This critical service has never been more needed, and the requested increase in funding can make a significant impact on the Network and member organization's ability to support survivors.

At the national level, there are disturbing trends against women. As you are probably aware, the Violence Against Women Act has not been reauthorized yet, and while it has been reauthorized regularly, this year may not yield the same result as past years. The Department of Justice recently narrowed the definition of domestic violence without any clear reason. Simultaneously, women's right to choose has come under fire in the judicial system, leaving women uncertain of our ability to be in control of our own bodies.

Luckily, I live in Vermont where women's lives and rights are consistently protected by our law makers, as was demonstrated last summer with the passage and signing into law of H.57. I am proud of my lawmakers for protecting women through bipartisan laws, even as our nation takes disturbing path against women. The requested \$500,000 general line item for the VT Network and its members is critical in this era of diminishing support to women, both to ensure services are available when needed, as well as continued demonstration to Vermont women that our lawmakers support our rights and needs.

For Lamoille County, this line item would flow down to support VT Network member organization Clarina Howard Nichols Center, serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and human trafficking. Last year, Clarina served more than 400 individuals and responded to 1,100 hotline calls with their small staff of 5 with a modest budget of \$454,000. The additional \$20,000 for Clarina from a \$500,000 increase to the VT Network would support competitive wages and benefits for our skilled staff and increased facility costs to ensure a safe and secure shelter. As costs increase and our funding environment becomes less secure, additional funding for critical services is more than welcome.

Thank you for considering this request and for all you do in support of women's rights and needs.

In appreciation,

Sarah (She/her)

*Owner/Founder Leaves of Change VT*

[www.leavesofchangevt.com](http://www.leavesofchangevt.com)