

**Home Access Program
Vermont Center for Independent Living
House Appropriations Testimony
February 20, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Patricia Tedesco and I coordinate the Home Access Program at the Vermont Center for Independent Living. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and for your long standing support for our program and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

VCIL provides accessibility modifications for Vermonters who have permanent physical disabilities so they can remain in their homes and live more independently.

You have a packet with photos and stories of people who have benefited from this important program. You'll see a photo of Souley, who lives in White River Junction; He wanted to share his story with you:

"Before I received the bathroom, I had to crawl on my knees and once I was in the bathroom it was very difficult to turn around. I had trouble getting in and out of the bathtub. I also had to make sure that I was undressed before reaching the door. Now ... I can ride my wheelchair into the bathroom and shower. I can dress and undress in the bathroom. I can go from the wheelchair to the toilet and to the shower. ... Thank you for making my life more independent."

Taking a shower or getting in and out of our homes easily is something perhaps most of us don't think twice about. However for the people we help, these issues are a daily struggle.

VCIL is requesting that you fund VHCB at the highest level possible. VHCB's FY 21 funding level required by statute is estimated at \$22.4 million from the property transfer tax.

The average cost of a project through VCIL is about \$10,000, compared to about \$97,000 a year to live in a nursing home. Our program is evidence based - it is saving the state money in the human services budget. Also, this funding trickles down to give

local contractors, and their skilled craftspeople, good-paying jobs doing home modifications throughout the state.

With the traditional funding levels between \$425 and \$475 thousand dollars from VHCB and \$100 thousand dollars from DAIL, our program is able to help with about 50 home modifications. The housing bond funding achieved the goal for VCIL – to reduce the wait list. However, with no “shot in the arm” of additional funding, we simply do not have the resources to help the many families in need around the state.

We work vigilantly to collaborate with partners and funders to reduce the cost of each project, however, right now we have 39 people on our wait list – and with applications coming in steadily - we expect to hit 100 before the fall. And so it goes.

Since our funding depends in large part on VHCB’s appropriation, we ask you to provide them with full statutory funding at \$22.4 million for FY 21.

Thank you for your time, I know you have difficult decisions to make.

Submitted by Patricia Tedesco
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"Now that I have a modified bathroom I can take a shower whenever I want and feel very safe and protected." Charlotte Stevens, Lyndonville, Caledonia County. Volunteer labor provided through Habitat for Humanity NEK.



"Before the ramp installation I had to climb four stairs (or go down...) every time I entered or exited the house. Having (the ramp) makes me feel much more stable and as (my health declines) I will be able to stay here more comfortably and safely." Patricia Austin Kirk, Hyde Park, Lamoille County



"Before I received the bathroom modification I had difficulty getting in and out of the tub. I had to hold on with both hands and move carefully to get in and out. ... Now that I have a modified bathroom I can get into the shower more easily. The high toilet is easier for my personal needs, too." Alice Bennett, Bennington County



"I applied for VCIL's HAP program because... (I) had to keep going up and down steps to bring everything inside. Many times I almost fell or did sometimes going up or down. I love the ramp and it makes my life so much better... Before I received the ramp I had to stay home because I was worried about falling." Sherrie Spraggins, Colchester, Chittenden County



Volunteers who built Eleanor's ramp from COVER Home Repair.



"I applied to VCIL's Home Access Program because [of] disabilities, loss of ambulatory. Before I received the ramp I had to risk walking down granite steps. Now that I have a ramp I can wheel myself in a wheelchair." Eleanor Campbell, Chelsea, Orange County.



"I was having trouble getting in and out of the tub. ... Now it is wonderful... Before... I felt like I was going to fall. Now that I have a modified bathroom, I feel like showering, before I dreaded it." Lois Welch, Wells River, Orange County.



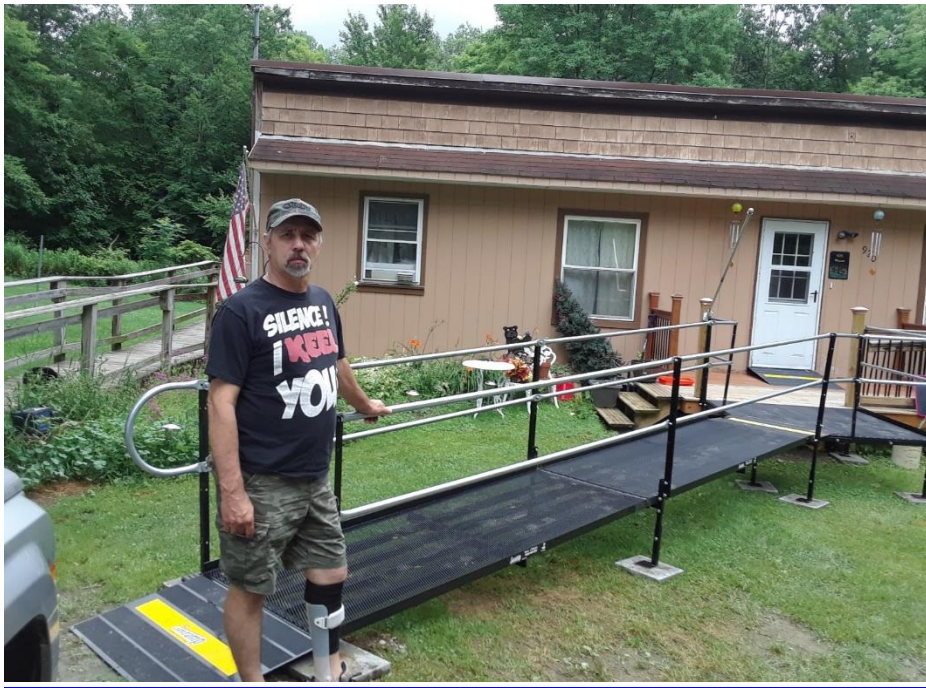
Lyndonville, Caledonia County



“Before I received the bathroom, I had to crawl on my knees and once I was in the bathroom it was very difficult to turn around. I had trouble getting in and out of the bathtub. I also had to make sure that I was undressed before reaching the door. Now ... I can ride my wheelchair into the bathroom and shower. I can dress and undress in the bathroom. I can go from the wheelchair to the toilet and to the shower. ... Thank you for making my life more independent.” Souley Marzouk, White River Junction, Windsor Co.



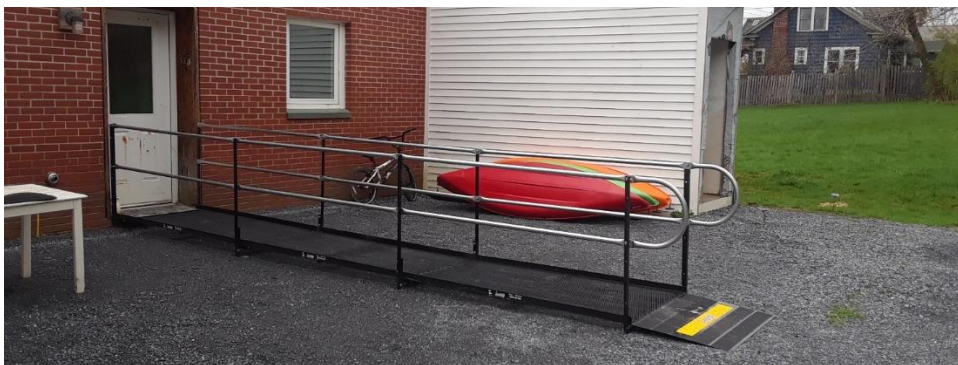
JV, Colchester, Chittenden County



Shaftsbury, Bennington County



West Wardsboro, Windham County



Bennington, Bennington County



Derby, Orleans County



Ascutney, Windsor County, built by COVER Home Repair volunteers