

Good evening. My name is Mary Moulton and I am the Executive Director of Washington County Mental Health Services.

Once again, this year, the budget for the state's designated and specialized services agencies, supported by Medicaid dollars, is level funded. Once again, this year, we come to our legislators to request an increase for the work that we do to serve all comers, thousands of Vermonters, who seek specialized mental health, substance use, and developmental/intellectual services. It is the Legislature who has responded to this request over the past 4 years through increases to Medicaid rates (as we are nearly 90% funded through Medicaid) that target staff increases, educational supports for our staff, and specialized staff positions that address our greatest areas of vacancy or turnover as **we strive to compete in a health care, education, and state salary market place that runs ahead of us by 10,000 for family support workers to 20,000-30,000 for clinicians and up to \$50,000 for nurses.**

I was especially disheartened when I recently learned that the Federal Medicaid match for global commitment will **increase in October 2020**, meaning that the State of Vermont, Agency of Human Services, will not have to spend as much **General Funds** in 2021 to match a Medicaid dollar. **Several million dollars will be saved** within the Agency of Human Services Budget as a result, and **YET** none of those dollars were invested in terms of a rate increase for designated agency state contracts that perform the state's community-based work.

Here in Washington County, we are very much about collaboration and integration of services. I'm very proud of our relationships as providers, whether it be through our eldercare clinician program with the Council on Aging; the hospice services we benefit from, through Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice, when we have a person entering last stages of life at one of our residential homes; the public private partnership we developed between Downstreet Housing, WCMHS, and Norwich University, resulting in two tiny houses built for people who are homeless and hard to house with an accompanying peer support program; the partnership we have with the Good Samaritan Shelter to provide clinical supports; the 1:1 school-based programming we provide in every school in the district; or the mental health supports we provide within primary care offices.

We are proud of the work our staff does; proud of the people we serve who work hard to achieve better health every day; and proud of our colleagues who come here this evening to ask you to respond to the growing needs within our communities. Once again, we thank you for the support you have provided and come forward this year with a request that will keep the mental health, substance use, and developmental/intellectual disability services designated agencies from falling further behind in staff and client supports – **specifically that is a 3% increase in our Medicaid budget for all services provided, including substance use treatment services, or approximately \$5.5 million in general funds.** Based on our experience with consistent and anticipated supports, we believe this will help us to reduce our current situation of 80 vacancies at WCMHS in a highly competitive market place.

Thank you so much!