

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my firm opposition to the new psych hospital that is being proposed in Middlesex. As a Vermont resident who is acutely familiar with the lack of robust mental health care in Vermont and its lasting effects on my community, I believe that creating another carceral psych institution is exactly the opposite of what our state needs to better care for its residents. Calling this institution a group home is inaccurate and misleading. Many of the individuals who will be held at this so-called group home have been institutionalized involuntarily, and all are unable to leave as they please, both forms of carceral violence. Restraint, seclusion, forced drugging, and violence are extremely damaging to anyone, but they are especially dangerous for people already experiencing distress. I have family members who are in successful, active recovery from mental health and addiction crises through voluntary admission to group homes, but I have watched many of my peers be institutionalized in places like this proposed hospital against their will and end up dead. Vermonters of color are also disproportionately affected by these practices, and these carceral practices can act as yet another form of systemic racial violence against one of our most vulnerable and vital group of people in this state. Creating another carceral psych hospital creates the wounds that we are aiming to heal. If you care about the health of Vermonters and , do not allow the construction of this psych prison and instead invest money into stronger community supports, group homes, mental health education, and places for healing. Please oppose the Middlesex psych prison and advocate for those struggling with mental health in our communities!

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**Sally Fletcher**