

MEMORANDUM

**To: Rep Mary Hooper and the House Appropriations Committee
Rep William Lippert and the House Health Care Committee
Rep Ann Pugh and the House Human Services Committee**
Fr: Julie Tessler, Vermont Care Partners
Re: Request for the FY22 Budget Adjustment Act
Da: January 7, 2022

As presented to your committee and summarized on the attached factsheet, the designated and specialized service agencies (DA/SSSAs) are in crisis mode addressing the rising demand for and increasing acuity of the children, families, and adults we serve in our communities with a greatly decreased and strained workforce. We do not think the funding levels proposed by the Governor for the FY22 Budget Adjustment Act for support to the health and human service workforce will be sufficient to support our staff and services through the end of the fiscal year.

We request an appropriation of \$22.5 million in the FY22 Budget Adjustment Act. This would enable agencies to provide the same level of investment to our community-based staff and shared living providers as the Administration is proposing to provide to state employees who do comparable work at the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VCPH) and the Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence. It would be less than the \$7,500 maximum per employee discussed by the Administration.

It is our understanding that the staff at the VCPH are scheduled to receive \$500 now and another \$2000 in June, if still employed. Additionally, they will receive a shift differential of \$80 per week on the day shift for approximately 12 weeks for another \$960. The total benefit per FTE would be \$3460. The DA/SSAs employ approximately 5000 FTEs and 1500 shared living providers. If they each received a similar level of added financial support the total expenditure would be a little more than \$22.5 million. Given differences in conditions and needs in agencies, flexibility in how the dollars are distributed would be helpful. Agencies would be accountable for these expenditures by reporting to state government how the funds were utilized and the outcome of the investments.

These expenditures would be clearly due to the COVID pandemic's impact on service demand and our workforce. Previous to the pandemic, our workforce was strained but not at this level of crisis. The majority of our services are funded through Medicaid.