

Dean Representatives Pugh, Wood, and McFaun,

On behalf of Vermont Family Network and the families we serve, I am writing to express our sincere thanks and strong support for the attached draft language before the House Human Service Committee meets this afternoon.

Thank you for hearing the voices of families, and specifically those of the parents of adult children with developmental disabilities who require a 24-hour support and care. Your willingness to support and fund expanded housing options, piloting a few groundbreaking projects to inform decisions about future housing for people with disabilities that promote choice and equity, is appreciated beyond words. The proposed Residential Program Developer position will be a strong support in the development of and access to housing choices that meet individual needs as expressed by people with developmental disabilities and their families. We are gratified to see the recommendation of the Quality Services Review Team, and believe it can address concerns about service quality, safety, and equity and inclusion as we move forward in meeting the growing needs of this population throughout Vermont. VFN is eager to participate in the proposed Steering Committee; thank you very much for including us.

Thank you for recognizing that our Agency of Human Services partners have not adequately engaged stakeholders in System of Care Plan input to date, especially with regard to conflict-free case management and the new assessment process. VFN commits to continuing to offer family voice and insight to the ongoing efforts to meet the promise of HCBS and FMAP. We hope that you will continue to insist on legislative oversight and full engagement of stakeholders as a necessary step in rebuilding the trust between self-advocates and their families, and the Developmental Services Division of DAIL.

In “Closing the Doors of the Institution, Opening the Hearts of our Communities” a booklet written upon and about the closing of the Brandon Training School, the conclusion states, “In the years ahead, we must be careful not to settle into a particular way of providing services. We must continue to change, to give people what they want and what they tell us they need...The state must affirm its commitment, both to people with disabilities and to the people who support them with services. We need to figure out ways of enabling individuals and their families to become involved in decisions about the services we offer.. We need to continue to prove to the community at large that making life better for those with the most intensive needs makes it better for all of us.”

Today, I feel you are taking bold steps to meet this important vision of *what can be*. Thank you, and please reach out to us if we can offer further support or insight!

All my best,
Pam

Pam McCarthy, M.Ed.
CEO / President