

**Home Access Program  
Vermont Center for Independent Living  
House Appropriations Testimony  
January 10, 2022**

Ordinarily, I would be sitting in front of your Committee, microphones in place, the State House buzzing with activity. This year, as we are all aware, is different.

*Please accept the following testimony for your consideration:*

My name is Patricia Tedesco and I am the Program Services Manager at the Vermont Center for Independent Living. On behalf of our peers throughout our state, we are grateful for your long standing support for our program and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

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

At the end of this narrative, you will find photos and stories of people who have benefited from this important program. You will hear from Vermonters like Joyce Hilson of **Orleans County**, who is the caregiver of her sister, Gail, who shared her story with us:

“I applied to VCIL's Home Access Program because my sister who lives with me could no longer use our tub and shower safely. We were unsure of what we would have to do as far as living arrangement. My sister has mentally challenged problems along with dementia, has lived with me for 30-plus years. **Thankfully, due to the help, she will continue to live here where she belongs.** Before I received the bathroom modification, I had to pick her up over the tub, hold her and help clean her which was unsafe for both of us.”

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 23 funding level required by statute 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.

We work vigilantly to collaborate with partners and funders to reduce the cost of each project, however, right now we have 53 people on our wait list – and with applications coming in steadily – we anticipate allocating all of our current funding which goes through September 30, 2022.

Since our funding depends in large part on VHCB's appropriation, we ask you to provide them with full statutory funding for FY 23.

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

Submitted by Patricia Tedesco  
VCIL's Program Services Manager



"I applied to VCIL's Home Access Program because I needed help in my home to make it safe for me. Before I received a bathroom modification, I had to take a shower in a tiny shower stall that had no room for my shower chair. And I often fell stepping over the 8" rise. Now that I have a modified bathroom, I can feel safe, shower by myself, and not fall down. I can walk in/out of the shower with ease...."

Janet Berner, **Windham County**



VCIL partners with non-profits like COVER Home Repair in White River Junction to build ramps with volunteer labor while VCIL pays for the materials. George Asheline, **Windsor County**



"I applied to VCIL's Home Access Program because the bathtub I had and toilet were hard for me to use as I had a hard time stepping up into the tub and the toilet was not good as well. Before I received the bathroom modification, I had a hard time to easily bathe or use the toilet. Now I feel confident to use the walk-in shower and enjoy doing so. ... **I can easily shower and use toilet as well as the new sink without worry of falling and or struggling** to do so." Rodney Therrien, **Franklin County**



"Before I received the ramp, I had to stay in the house 24/7. Now that I have the ramp, I can go for a walk with my grandson. If someone doesn't know about VCIL's Home Access Program, I would tell them this is the best program ever." Jeffrey Mott, **Franklin County**



“Transferring into my old shower was very dangerous for me, also getting into the bathroom through the doorways was another problem with doorways being too narrow. Before I received the bathroom modification, I had to take sponge baths, it was next to impossible to get into bathroom or transfer because of loss of second leg and using the toilet was impossible as well. Now that I have a modified bathroom, I can get into shower with no problem, have room to move easier to shower with grab bars and the shower head mounted on the bar as well is definitely a plus. ... I also want to say thank you for being and doing what your organization does making lives easier for the disabled. In my case it has made my mobility a lot better getting in and out of shower and doing things for myself.” William Spaulding, **Windham County**



“I needed help opening my apartment door to be able to get my wheelchair out of my apartment. Before I received my entrance modification, I had to stay in my apartment. Now that I have a modified entrance, I can get out of my apartment so I can get my mail, go to eye doctor, dentist, cardiologist, and urologist.” Glen Palmore, **Chittenden County**





VCIL uses modular ramps which can be moved and retrofitted for use in a new location if the peer moves; the ramps can also be moved to a new location if the peer no longer needs the ramp.



"Before I received the bathroom modification, I had to walk to the tub, sit on bench, and lift legs over top of tub. Very inconvenient getting in and out. Now that I have a modified bathroom, I can move around easily and have hand bars within my reach. Easy to step into and out of." James Kenyon, **Bennington County**