

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

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January 10, 2022

*Sent via email only to: [tutton@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:tutton@leg.state.vt.us)*

Representative Mary Hooper  
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Re: Budget Adjustment and FY23 Budgeting to meet the needs of Developmental Services recipients

Dear Representative Hooper,

We are writing in support of the proposal of Vermont Care Partners to provide both in Budget Adjustment, and the FY23 budget for an infusion of funds for the Developmental Services Program.

The staffing crisis in the developmental services program means that many Vermonters with developmental disabilities are without sufficient staffing and supports. For some of our clients these represent dire, secluded, or potentially destabilizing situations.

We have clients across the state approved to receive necessary developmental services including home supports, employment supports, and community supports, who are not receiving some or most of their services because of the workforce crisis. Clients have been warehoused in motels, have seen their homes shut down with no notice, and no plan for relocation. We have adult clients who have had to urgently move back in with parents because of the loss of home providers or staff to support living in their home. We have clients who are children sitting at home for months because the designated agency can't hire staff for their special education program. And, we have clients with complex medical needs at very serious risk of institutionalization, including out of state institutionalization, because the lack of staffing is leading to burnout by their parent/family caregivers.

The Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and the Developmental Services Division, have not acted with the necessary urgency to address this staffing crisis. We have not heard any concrete proposals or plans from DAIL to address the widening gap between need and service provision.

The Vermont Care Partners proposal for increased pay rates and predictable rate increases are the necessary minimum to keep these jobs at wages where any kind of recruitment or retention is

possible. We also support increased flexibility for recruitment and retention bonuses and shift differentials in Budget Adjustment, and for the FY23 budget to allow expanded tuition assistance and scholarships. These financial supports are but the first necessary step to begin to alleviate this crisis of unfilled staffing and frequent turnover in the workforce.

The Disability Law Project represents individuals with developmental disabilities with legal issues related to those disabilities. In the 25 years we have worked in this field, we have never been so worried about our clients. We ask the House Appropriations Committee to approve the Vermont Care Partners request so that our clients can live and work in safe and dignified environments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Rachel Seelig*  
Rachel Seelig  
Director  
Disability Law Project  
Vermont Legal Aid, Inc.