

Testimony From Those Housed Through the GA Motel Voucher System

Joint House General and House Human Services Committees – Oct 18, 2021

Rev. Beth Ann Maier, Vermont Interfaith Action

Cathy – worked all her life as LNA and healthcare worker. She is disabled with heart problems and needs to use a walker. She left shared housing to care for her partner with a feeding tube who was on a GA voucher living in a motel room recovering from treatment for throat cancer. He would otherwise require assisted care.

Her requests:

- We are asking for a clearly stated and stable plan for our housing through the winter. We can't continue with the day-to-day stress of not knowing we will have shelter.
- The paperwork is a huge burden and very wasteful. We must re-submit our GA eligibility paperwork every month, even when nothing has changed, and each of the many housing applications can run to 20 pages. This is very stressful.

Nichole – she and her partner were both employed and meeting the basic needs of their family. They needed to leave the apartment they had lived in for three years with her two young children due to rats, mold, water damage, fire safety issues and lead. Now she and her partner are hotel housed an hour away from her children so that they can remain near their school and daycare.

Her request:

- We must have safe and affordable housing to keep our family healthy and together. Please make rental housing inspections mandatory and enforceable.

Belinda – worked for over 30 years as a mental healthcare worker. She is now disabled with a foot amputation. She has been hotel-housed for months.

Her requests:

- We want everyone to have shelter this winter, but there has to be some separation between vulnerable people and people with a history of violence. It is unsafe to mix these two groups in hotel housing.
- We request an ombudsman for all of us that are experiencing homelessness. We rely on the agencies and non-profits for our well-being. We should not be afraid of retribution when we speak out about the things that concern us, such as breaches of confidentiality, unfair treatment, being moved from site to site without cause or reason.