



MEMORANDUM

To: House Committee on Human Services and House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs

**From: Paul Dragon, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity,
Executive Director
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Subject: Homeless and Housing Services

Date: 10/25/2021

Dear Chair Pugh, Chair Stevens and Members of the Committees,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify on housing and homelessness on 10/18/2021. I have once again attached that testimony for your reference. In retrospect my testimony did not provide the needed balance our mental health system and designated agencies deserve. When I was comparing the lack of funding for our emergency housing system in Vermont which houses many of the most vulnerable Vermonters I was comparing that relative lack of funding with other systems such as the mental health and medical systems. I do want to amend my testimony to assure you that our mental health system is vitally important and has done incredible work particularly through COVID. We also have important and dynamic relationships with our mental health partners. They have been overworked and have gone through many staffing challenges particularly in this past year. The staff and leadership of these organizations have gone above and beyond during this time. The points I made around coordination, support and on-site services stand however I did not mean to suggest that the mental health agencies were not doing quality work or were resourced at levels needed especially during this time. I was hoping to make the comparison to our emergency shelter system and the need for a whole community approach to ending homelessness. I do regret my lack of balance.

Thank you for considering this amendment.