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**Subject:** Comprehensive Care Clinic for HIV/AIDS treatment

Dear Chairs Kitchel and Lyons,

We write to you today representing the staff and leadership of the Comprehensive Care Clinic for HIV/AIDS at UVMHN. This includes care at UVM Medical Center as well as at our satellite clinics housed at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Rutland Regional Medical Center, and Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital. While we greatly appreciate the House position on HIV care, we are reaching out to highlight an area of essential HIV care that is in acute need of additional support and was left out of the House Appropriation. We are seeking an additional \$100,000 to support funding for the Comprehensive Care Clinic for HIV/AIDS at UVMHN.

Our team provides an essential frontline service for Vermonters living with HIV/AIDS. This includes consulting with primary care providers around the state on HIV care with a goal of facilitating access to care, increasing testing and reducing HIV stigma.

While we have been able to continue to function and provide good care, patients' needs have increased during the pandemic. The acuity of people's struggles to maintain their mental health has increased and substance use disorders have worsened. Our clinic relies heavily on state and federal funds to function and the salaries of several key employees, including our Social Worker/Case Manager and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner are comprised substantially of grant funds. We also rely on grant funding to partially support the salaries of our physicians and nurses.

**We hope to address this increase in need by offering more outreach services to see patients who are unable or unwilling to present to a medical facility. We also hope to offer more mental health services on site (therapy) as there is a statewide shortage of mental health providers and our patients often have a long wait for services. Additionally, in order to ensure we are responding effectively to a shifting health care landscape, we want to devote time to strategic planning with our staff and group of patient advisors.**

The \$100,000 would be spent in the following way:

Purpose	Amount	Justification
Funding to support mobile outreach	\$50,000	We already do some outreach to people who are not able to come in to clinic or who do not feel comfortable coming to a hospital during a pandemic. These funds would support a RN position to be able to come to these visits and draw blood that would then be brought back to a lab for processing.

Funding to expand mental health offerings in clinic	\$50,000	This money would be used to hire a .5 FTE social worker. Currently we have .9 FTE of a social worker who does case management for nearly 500 patients. Hiring another person to do case management would support the services we currently offer and would allow our current LICSW to offer therapy in clinic one day a week. <b>Mental health care is in short supply and access to short term therapy has been an issue for our patients. This would reduce barriers and create access so that we were offering not only mental health medication management but also specialized therapy by a clinician who is very familiar with issues specific to HIV care.</b>
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Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Devika Singh, MD, MPH  
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University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine  
Project Director  
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University of Vermont Medical Center

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