

Good afternoon Madame Chair and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to come and talk with you today about housing options for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

My name is Katie Tormey and this is my daughter Emily DeCarolis and our good friend and neighbor Silas Callison.

I am a member of the DDHI (Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative). We are a parent-led, volunteer advocacy group of over 100 parents throughout the state who are working towards the development of service-supported housing for our adult children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), many of whom have significant support needs.

Emily recently turned 35 and Silas is 23 yrs old. Both these young adults want to live outside their parents homes, with friends and in the community they have grown up in. They want what their brothers and sisters have. They want a place to call home.

Since Emily was very young, I often wondered what her life would be like as an adult. Would she have friends, a job, a home of her own? And with time, that wonder turned to worry, as I began to research and talk with people and found that there were few options in the state for any permanent service supported housing for young adults such as Emily. Would Emily live with her parents forever? And what would happen when we were unable to provide the support she needed? Needless to say, we parents have the corner on WORRY.

Since the close of Brandon 30 years ago there has been little money invested by the State in service supported housing for adults with I/DD. The few group homes there are in Vermont are designated for individuals with intensive medical or behavioral needs.

The only other option is the Shared Living Provider Model which is not always a good option for many reasons. It can often be isolating, with little to no oversight, and is never a permanent home. Oftentimes referred to as "adult foster care".

Hence, there are few options for individuals like Emily and Silas to live outside their aging parents homes.

Our children deserve better and I know Vermont can do better.

The State of Vermont failed to meet their obligations under Federal

Medicaid Rules, and now have 2 Corrective Action Plans to demonstrate that HCBS recipients have true choice, including choices in housing. The three Act 186 Pilot Planning Grants are contained in the latest Corrective Action Plan. However DAIL did not request funding for building the Planning Grant projects.

After much work navigating a very steep learning curve of the “system”, Emily recently moved out of her parents' homes and into an apartment with a live-in support person. She has a Sec 8 Housing Voucher from BHA which pays most of her rent and utilities, HCBS waiver budget for services and a monthly SSI check. Financially, this works well for her. Her Dad and I provide the oversight of the apartment, the roommate/aide and Emily’s day to day activities. But we are aging, and eventually will not be able to provide this degree of support.

Which is why we are here at the Statehouse today, ASKING for your support.

We are thankful to the state for the funding of 3 Pilot Planning Grants in 2022 to begin the process of housing choice for adults with I/DD. The grants have been awarded and we are back at the Statehouse this year asking for funding to make these peer-residences a reality. The 3 projects provide a variety of service supported models of housing for individuals with I/DD.

The Chittenden County grant lead is Champlain Housing Trust. The project in Burlington will be a residence for individuals with varying levels of support needs, with a mix of efficiency apartments, bedrooms for high-support individuals and staff, and common community space. The project is working with The Howard Center and Champlain Community Services, and will provide homes for 8 to 10 people.

The Washington and Orange County grant is led by Upper Valley Services, working with Downstreet on two projects. The project in Waterbury will house 3 individuals in 3 units with an additional unit for staff within a larger apartment building. The project in Randolph is a renovation

of a family home and an additional building providing homes for 2 to 4 people.

The Addison County project is in Monkton. The lead is Riverflow, a 501c3, established by two families of adult children with I/DD. Riverflow will be an intentional community, similar to Heartbeet in Hardwick and will provide homes for up to 15 individuals.

Last year's Housing Brief by the VTDDC reports the immediate need for 602 housing units for adults with I/DD. These 3 Pilot Planning grants will provide housing for 30-35 individuals when they are completed. These projects are just the beginning.

We are having ongoing discussions with the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Vermont Housing Conservation Board and the Vermont Dept of Housing and Community Development. These agencies are all willing to support the funding of these projects and have a variety of loans and grants eligible for creating housing for people with ID/DD. But this funding will not cover the entire cost. We are looking to the State to help bridge that gap; to assist in creating a pipeline of funding for future service supported housing for adults with I/DD.

Thank you for your time.