

Dear House Representatives and Senators,

I come before you as a Vermont resident of 45 years, a parent of a vulnerable adult on the autism spectrum who is now 28 years of age living at home with his aging parents. When I was asked years ago to be on a committee to advocate for people with developmental disabilities my world opened up to knowing people different from me. I thought they were courageous, kind, intuitive and vulnerable. Little did I know years later I would enter this world even more intimately with the birth of our son in 1995, a few years after The Brandon Training School was closed down permanently. The irony we have learned today is there was a lack of preparedness for the services needed and there was a lack of awareness for the option of choice in housing for our most vulnerable. One would live with a paid shared living provider or with their families. But what happened after the parents passed on? The parents however feeble that kept going working in personal care, and caregiving their loved one until they dropped. Some of their adult children still had sleep problems awakening all hours of the night, medical symptoms and educational needs that parents took on bypassing their own health needs.

I thought all the years of advocating for our children in the schools, in the medical arena and testifying at the Statehouse for our children would certainly create outcomes that would guarantee our children as adults would have more opportunities to live their lives in happy productive environments. Little did I know that our beloved state did not prepare for our kids to grow up. Where did they think they would live with support services? Where was the vocational training? Why were there such low limited choices for our adult children? Why were the salaries for direct support workers so low as to not expect this to be a professional position the way nurses and social workers are? I as a parent to a vulnerable high support needs adult child am requesting that our state budget include this population for choices in housing, including supportive services , retention of professionally paid and trained direct support workers . We passed a bill that now has our state acknowledging that there are real housing and community needs not being met. DDHI Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative has 3 Pilot grants that need to be funded adequately. A pipeline of funding must happen to allow this to continually exist. It is not a gift but a necessity. It is ADA compliance. Let's help the 600 plus people on our waiting list. We request \$11 M to be in the budget at this time. As one House Rep told me, " it's time."

Thank you .

Sincerely, Anne M Barbano