

Bennett Townley
bennetttownley@gmail.com

Hi, my name is Bennett Gica Townley. I am 26 years old and have lived in Williston since coming to America in 2001 from Romania. My family is a member of DDHI, and I have a developmental disability and other diagnoses. I would like to advocate why peer service supported affordable housing in Vermont is important to me and my uniquely-abled friends.

Since elementary school I have made many friends with I/DD in Williston and surrounding Chittenden County towns. I would like to continue to live in Williston in a neighborhood with the friends I grew up and attended school with. Most importantly, I feel safer in Williston, than I would in other places in Chittenden County as many people know and would help us if needed. Alas, my friends and I want to have choices about where we live, who we live with, and how we want to live. We would like stable, permanent, inclusive, accessible, service-supported housing in our community so we can live together.

We need this type of housing immediately, since many of us are living with aging parents, including my friends and I, and we can't afford regular housing on our own. We don't drive and need to live near public transportation or we can safely walk to amenities.

I ask you to fund \$10.82 M to implement all 3 pilot grants and annual development of Service-Supported housing so my friends and I can have the housing we need and it will help me feel more competent. My friends and I are at the age where we want to have a place to call home that is not our folks' place or a group home and experience the same freedoms other people our age do but with support and a safety net.

Thank you for your time to hear my advocacy.