

I am writing to ask the Vermont Legislature to prioritize funding appropriate housing for adults with intellectual & developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Vermont in the FY25 budget.

Currently, I work as a community-based registered nurse whose work includes supporting the health of youth & adults with I/DD, and my previous experiences included supporting youth with I/DD in schools and the community.

Some of these youth are now facing the harsh realities of loss of services as they "age out" of the support they received through their educational programs; others are preparing for the same painful transition points. Because each individual's needs are unique, it is imperative that there are real choices for how services and, especially, how housing can be provided. For some, living with family is the best choice. However, for many, living with peers in a community with services is the best choice. Following the principles of client-centered care, all youth with I/DD and their families deserve a choice and a say in their housing. Without any available service-supported housing, there is not a choice.

In addition to the negative impacts on the health of adults with I/DD, the lack of service-supported housing within the state places the family caregivers of adults with I/DD at high risk for adverse health events themselves. "Family caregivers" most often translates, in my experience, to aging single mothers. These caregivers are often sleep-deprived, socially isolated, and unable to hold full-time jobs due to lack of programming and alternate caregivers to relieve them. It can be impossible for caregivers to attend to their own health care needs and appointments. Further, should these family members become ill, hospitalized or pass away, the vulnerable adults with I/DD they have cared for must suffer, not only the grief associated with the loss of a loved one, but also complete uncertainty about every aspect of their lives. Although this would be difficult for anyone, it is devastating for someone whose baseline challenges include communication, adaptive behavior and understanding.

Please allocate adequate funding for the development of service-supported housing in Vermont for adults I/DD and moderate to high needs in the FY25 budget.

Sincerely,
Corey Mallon, BSN, RN