

To the House and Senate Appropriations Committees,

My name is Sydney Bigwood and I am a Social Worker for the Birthing Center and the Mother-Baby Unit at the University of Vermont Medical Center. As both a citizen/human being and a professional, I am voicing my support for the funding request for Empty Arms Vermont in the FY25 budget.

I support this funding request because I have witnessed firsthand the importance of these kinds of services in the work that I do. Pregnancy and infant loss is such a devastating and unique experience, and a peer support model is a vital infrastructure to assist these families. As part of my practice with these bereaved parents, referring to Empty Arms is a no-brainer. Empty Arms is one of the first things I offer to families, and we have their brochures for peer support groups in all of our resource folders we provide to patients. The ability to refer people to a trusted organization staffed by people with lived experience is imperative to our healthcare system. And knowing that my patients and families will receive excellent support and follow-up from Empty Arms is a huge comfort to me.

I hope you will consider this in your decision regarding the Empty Arms Vermont budget funding request.

Kindly,
Sydney Bigwood
Resident of Burlington, VT for 10+ years
Social Worker at UVMHC Birthing Units