

My name is David Frye.

I live in North Ferrisburg, Vermont.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

I want to talk to you about housing for people with disabilities.

I am a member of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, Co-Chair of the public Policy Committee, and I am on the boards of other organizations.

I am going to share a little about my experience – however I know from all the meetings I go to and listening sessions I have listened to- I am not alone or unique.

I lived with 5 different shared living providers in 5 years and none of them were a good fit.

It's a good thing my suit case has wheels!

I needed them!

I am a gay man, I do a tv show about the intersection of living with a disability and being lgbqtia- called Pride-ability. Being Gay is an important part of my identity.

I lived with a shared living provider who wasn't comfortable having someone gay in her house. I need to be gay when I am at home.

I am a chef- I have worked at Wake Robin for 15 years. I've worked in professional kitchens for nearly 40 years. I also host a cooking show.

I like to cook and eat all kinds of food. I lived with a shared living provider who eats vegan. No one should have to eat vegan who doesn't want to.

At one point I was matched up with a gay male couple. And they turned out to be neat freaks. They routinely came into my room when the door was closed and cleaned or criticized me. They told me I smelled and my room smelled and after working on my feet for 8 hours in the kitchen, they told me my feet smelled. No one should have to get insulted like that when they get home from work.

The final straw for me was when I moved in with a shared living provider who was my case manager's boss. Because of their relationship at work – I had to get a new case manager. I really liked my case manager and should have been able to choose to keep her and live some where else.

The good news is I switched agencies. I have lived independently in the community in my own apartment for 5 years. I could not do it without the support I receive from Champlain Community Services. Direct support staff help me with things like filing my taxes, paying my bills and keeping my benefits.

I missed a lot of services because of the pandemic- and high staff turnover.

Please support more housing options for people with disabilities and please support the shared living providers and direct support staff who support people in the community so that we can live our best possible lives.

Thank you for your time and for your service.