



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

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TO: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs
and the House Committee on General and Housing

RE: Housing in Vermont

FROM: Susan Aranoff, J.D., Senior Planner and Policy Analyst

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My name is Susan Aranoff. I am the senior planner and policy analyst for the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council. It is a pleasure to see you here today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

The Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council (hereafter “VTDDC”) is a statewide board created by the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights (hereafter “the DD Act”), first adopted by Congress in 1970. Our constituents are health care users who have an important stake in the cost, quality, and availability of both traditional healthcare and disability long term services and supports. An estimated 86,000 Vermonters experience a developmental disability as defined by the DD Act, with approximately 5,100 receiving some type of community-based support through Medicaid.

VTDDC is charged under federal law with engaging at the state level in “advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities that... contribute to the coordinated, consumer-and-family-centered, consumer-and-family directed, comprehensive system that includes needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.”

The VTDDC is a majority of people with disabilities. The Council adopts an annual legislative platform. This year's platform has 2 Housing Planks.

1. Include shared living providers in the housing improvement program.
2. Include people with disabilities in all new housing initiatives.

Vermont needs more accessible housing for people with disabilities. People with disabilities and people housing people with disabilities, like shared living providers and family members, need financial support to make modifications for access.

New rules impacting all Medicaid funded shared living providers take effect in 30 days. There are over 2000 shared living providers for people with disabilities. We need more than 100 more right now. We cannot afford to lose any.

We also need new models for service supported housing for people with disabilities.

The mission of the VT Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or live with a disability.

Vermont cannot possibly be the best place to live with a disability if there is no housing available for people with disabilities who need support to live in the community.

The programs that fund improvements for landlords who house formerly unhoused people should be expanded to include funding for modifications for people with disabilities and people who provide housing to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities and the families and workforce that support people with disabilities to live their best possible lives in the community need support and oversight now.