

Good afternoon Committee Chairs and Members. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you about the dire need for supported housing for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

My name is Katie Tormey and I live in Burlington. I am the mother of a young woman with Down Syndrome, (Emily is 36yrs old) and I am also a member of DDHI, the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative. We are a parent-led, volunteer advocacy group of over 125 parents throughout the state who are working towards the development of stable, service-supported peer residences for our adult children with I/DD, many of whom have significant support needs.

Since the closure of Brandon 30yrs ago and the promise that this population of Vermonters would be housed, cared for and integrated into their communities, there has been little money invested by the State to see this through. The State has relied on the Shared Living Provider model, essentially Adult Foster Care for 30yrs. This model can be isolating, with little to no oversight, and is never a permanent home.

We parents are aging. There are 75/80yr old parents caring for their 45 year old adult sons and daughters, many that need 24/7 care. This is not sustainable. Who will care for our adult children when we are no longer alive? It is a worry that we parents know all too well. Our children deserve better and I know Vermont can do better.

The State of Vermont has failed to meet their obligations under Federal Medicaid Rules, and now have a Corrective Action Plan to demonstrate that HCBS recipients have true choice, including choices in housing.

The passage of Act 186 provided the funding for 3 Pilot Planning Grants to explore new housing models for adults with I/DD. Two out of the 3 projects have been fully funded. The 3rd project, headed by Champlain Housing Trust, is on St. Paul Street in Burlington. This unique model combines permanent affordable housing, individualized support services and community inclusion. Each of the 10 tenants will have their own apartment with a lease and receive support from on-site staff. The model was designed with the input of adults with I/DD and their families, is affordable, sustainable, aligned with best practice and adheres to state and federal regulations.

The cost of this project is higher than a traditional affordable housing development. The design prioritizes accessibility with larger interior spaces and common areas for community building - attributes consistent with the needs of adults with I/DD.

This project is \$2.8M short of being fully funded; that is less than 25% of the total funding. The State has funded the PLANNING of this project, CHT has accessed significant funds from multiple other sources for IMPLEMENTATION of this project. We are now asking the State for the \$2.8M which will bring us over the finish line.

To address the 602-unit demand identified in the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Councils 2023 Research Brief, this housing model must be implemented to demonstrate viability, sustainability and efficiencies.

Thank you for your time.