

FY26 Public Budget Testimony

Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Raven Walters. I am the Executive Director at Green Mountain Support Services. We are based in Lamoille County and provide services throughout northern Vermont.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am here to advocate for a 6.2% Medicaid rate increase for designated and specialized service agencies. This increase is vital to our ability to provide the essential services that keep Vermonters safe, healthy, and living in their communities.

I want to express our deep appreciation for your ongoing support of Vermonters' health and welfare. Your dedication helps ensure that the essential services we provide are available to those who need them most.

The aging parent who wants to stay at home with his family following a dementia diagnosis; the young adult with autism who, with the right support can go on to live independently; the mother of three who is recovering from a stroke - all these people rely on the Designated and Specialized service agencies.

We appreciate that you recognize the critical role these agencies play.

Increases in Medicaid rates have not kept pace with the consumer price index, so our funding has not kept pace with the rising costs of living and service provision. This makes it very difficult to recruit and retain the well-qualified employees that Vermont families count on and hurts our ability to provide services.

I also want to stress that when people go without the services we can provide they are much more likely to experience preventable crises, including unnecessary emergency department visits, hospitalization, and homelessness.

In conclusion, I urge you to support the requested 6.2% increase. These funds will allow our strong network of local provider agencies to continue to meet the needs of some of Vermont's most vulnerable, and will reduce the need for more costly emergency response services.

Thank you,

*Elizabeth*

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