



Thank you Chair Scheu and Chair Perchlik for hosting these sessions. I am Connor Timmons, Executive Director of HomeShare Vermont.

I am seeking your support for the continuation of \$235,000 in funding to sustain the growth of HomeShare Vermont's service area that now includes 12 of Vermont's 14 counties. You may recall that last year I was sitting in this chair making the initial request for this support and the legislature responded positively based on the need and what I hope was an appreciation for the efficiency of our model, and the value homesharing brings to the lives of those who participate in the program.

HomeShare Vermont is a program that matches older Vermonters, Vermonters with disabilities and anyone who has extra space in their homes, with folks looking for an affordable place to live. Guests provide some service in exchange for reduced rent in the form of household support like snow shoveling, transportation, or a just in case presence. We run 6 background checks and 3 reference checks and conduct lengthy interviews for all participants before they can be considered for a match. Critically our program also provides ongoing support for all participants.

Our expansion plans have moved forward at a good pace, and we've made progress relatively quickly just as we expected. We've onboarded and trained a complement of new case managers from our partner organizations at Windham & Windsor Housing Trust and the Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging. We've conducted dozens of outreach events in our new service areas and I'm excited to report that participation numbers are stronger than expected and continue to trend in the right direction.

Our model requires that case managers conduct regular check-ins to make sure all parties are safe and that all agreements are being upheld throughout the duration of a match. The accountability and peace of mind that comes with ongoing support is critical to the success rates we've seen over the last 43 years of operation. As such, once we've opened an area and begun making matches, we are not in a position to simply close down a region, county or town where matches are active.

Expanding HomeShare's services statewide has been suggested by lawmakers for many years and has most recently been singled out as a strategy for supportive living in Vermont's Age Strong Plan. I will also note that homesharing can (and will) be a lifeline for many Vermonters trying to make ends meet. We predict that as federal cuts continue to impact communities, the need for that lifeline will be vital to more Vermonters-and we need to be ready to serve those folks.

I'd like to remind the group that HomeShare Vermont has been a national and international leader in the homesharing movement for over 4 decades, something I take no personal credit for, but it's the support and wisdom of our legislators that have been a key component to that success and that's something our state should be proud of.

I look forward to discussing the details of this plan with you all in the coming weeks.