

Dear Members of the Vermont State Legislature,

I am writing to urge your attention to the urgent and growing need for safe, affordable, and appropriately supported housing for Vermonters with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This issue is deeply personal to me, both as a parent and as a housing professional.

My daughter lives with epileptic encephalopathy and requires daily support to ensure her safety. Like many families across Vermont, we are constantly navigating the uncertainty of what her future housing and care options will look like as she grows older. The availability of stable, supportive housing is not a luxury for individuals like my daughter—it is essential to their safety, dignity, and ability to live meaningful lives in their communities.

In my role as Executive Director of the Springfield Housing Authority, I see firsthand how limited the system is in addressing these needs. While housing authorities are committed to serving vulnerable populations, we face significant barriers when it comes to developing or sustaining housing for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Funding streams are fragmented, insufficient, and often do not align with the true costs of providing safe housing paired with the supports residents require. Capital funding, operating subsidies, and service funding rarely work together in a way that makes these projects feasible.

As a result, families are left with few options. Individuals with intellectual disabilities remain on long waiting lists, live in inappropriate or unsafe settings, or remain at home with aging caregivers who worry daily about what will happen when they are no longer able to provide care. This is not due to a lack of commitment or innovation at the local level - it is due to insufficient, sustained state investment.

Vermont has long prided itself on valuing inclusion, community, and care for its most vulnerable residents. To live up to those values, we must increase funding and coordination for housing and supportive services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This includes expanding program capacity, ensuring operating support keeps pace with real costs, and recognizing that housing stability is foundational to health, safety, and quality of life.

I ask you to consider both the human impact and the long-term cost savings of investing in these programs now. Stable, supported housing reduces emergency interventions, hospitalizations, and crisis placements, while allowing individuals to thrive in their communities.

As both a mother and a housing professional, I can say with certainty that the need is real, the gaps are significant, and the consequences of inaction are profound. I urge you to prioritize funding and policy solutions that ensure Vermonters with intellectual disabilities—and the families who love and support them—have a future that is safe, stable, and secure.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of this critical issue.

Respectfully,

Laura Ryan