

Ryan Newswanger, Barnard

My name is Ryan Newswanger. I live in East Barnard, Vermont. I have been a Transportation Volunteer with Bridges to Health since 2023.

I am here today because I'm asking you to please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for Fiscal Year 2027.

Over the past three years, I have assisted many people with rides to medical appointments through Bridges to Health. I have met them at dairy farms and other places of work. I have translated for them in medical offices, at pharmacies, at dental clinics, and with their employers.

In some cases, we have become friends. They have invited me to dinner in their homes, and reach out to me regularly with updates on their lives.

Many of these folks, doing some of the hardest jobs imaginable, suffer from depression and other health issues caused by being isolated from their culture, their friends, and their families. They feel an added burden of fear and worry now given our current politics.

The assistance that Bridges to Health offers makes a huge difference in the lives of people who have come to Vermont to work. These workers are trying to support their families while dealing with a different language, different weather, different customs, and a health care system that is complicated to navigate, even for native English speakers.

This is why this program is so important.

As one person said to me, as we left a pharmacy where I had helped him obtain medication for his wife, "It is so much easier when people help us."

So please support Bridges to Health with a \$500,000 appropriation for Fiscal Year 2027.

Thank you for considering this request.