

Good morning Honorable members of House Health Care,  
I am reaching out to you to express how important the Howard Community Outreach Program is for the City of Winooski, I know you have much to consider this year, but this program is invaluable.

The State of Vermont Department of Mental Health has again requested an elimination of funding for the State's share of the Howard Community Outreach Program. Please see page 29 of the following:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2026/Workgroups/House%20Health%20Care/FY%202027%20Budget/W~Emily%20Hawes~DMH%202027%20Budget~1-30-2026.pdf>

Note, Community Outreach - Chittenden County (\$160,000):

Health and Human Services were removed from local government in Vermont the 1960's. The State of Vermont collects taxes and has in-house and significant contracted support to operate these services. A coalition of ten communities in Chittenden County provides \$337,000 or 46% of the annual funding for Howard Community Outreach's \$736,000 annual program.

Howard Community Outreach workers support (though do not replace) all public safety response to community members needing staff trained in navigating the health, mental health, and human services network and services. **They are a critical low-barrier resource for our most vulnerable community members who would otherwise generate a disproportionate number of public safety calls for service.** Such folks often do not have access to phones to call 2-1-1, and/or lack the bandwidth to navigate support services without help. Community Outreach workers **meet people where they are - indeed, seek them out - and thereby provide irreplaceable upstream support that is more effective for people they help and reduces load on the downstream support system.**

We urge your support in having this funding reinstated for Winooski and the other communities involved which include: Town of Essex, City of Essex Junction, Milton, Colchester, Winooski, South Burlington, Shelburne, Williston, Richmond, and Hinesburg.

Thank you,  
Thomas

Thomas Renner  
Interim Mayor  
City of Winooski  
<https://www.winooski.vt.gov>