



Written Testimony – Response to 26-0766 Draft 2.1
Katarina Lisaius, Advocacy and Organizing Manager
February 11, 2026

Thank you to the committee for continuing to address homelessness in Vermont and for the opportunity to share the Vermont Network's response to 26-0766 Draft 2.1.

Any changes to Vermont's temporary and emergency shelter system must consider the needs of survivors, a distinct population with unique needs, systems of care, and federal laws and policies that dictate how these organizations provide shelter and case management.

We highly recommend that the funding and framework of our existing program continue into the future. We support codifying this framework into law, as was contemplated in H.91 last year.

Comments on 26-0766 Draft 2.1

We appreciate the Committee's continued work to strengthen, improve, and find efficiencies within Vermont's shelter and homelessness services sector. We also understand that 26-0766 is currently under review and will be modified by the committee. ***We offer the comments and requests below and would welcome the opportunity to testify on any future drafts.***

Comments and Requests:

- **Eligible household definition - Sec 4 (g) page 5, line 4:**
We share concerns about the eligible household definition and want to ensure this encapsulates survivors who are fleeing violence, receiving emergency shelter, and may need to relocate out-of-state to escape violence.
- **Fleeing - Sec 4 (12) (C) page 5, line 17:**
We request that language is updated to include sexual violence survivors: "fleeing or attempting to flee domestic **and sexual** violence"
- **Services - Sec 2210 page 13, lines 13-15:**
As written, we believe domestic and sexual violence survivors are specifically exempted for certain services. It is important that our services are exempt, or the bill language would ***jeopardize the federal funding our Member Organizations receive.***

Voluntary services are a requirement of the federal Violence Against Women Act and the [Family Violence Prevention and Services Act statutes](#). Voluntary means ***survivors cannot be mandated*** to



participate in supportive services and no conditions can be placed on survivors of domestic and sexual violence in order to access or continue receiving emergency shelter. This requirement mandates a unique and voluntary approach to services by domestic and sexual violence providers.

- **Shelter services for survivors - Sec 7 page 15, lines 15-21 and page 16, lines 1-11:**

We appreciate your work on this bill and desire to codify our relationship with OEO to serve survivors. Since the end of the 2025 legislative session, we have had a contract with OEO to provide shelter services to survivors. An overview of our homelessness services is included on the final page of the testimony.

We believe part of the text in section 7 is now no longer necessary as we have a formal contract with OEO that addresses many of these accountability measures.

"(1) The ~~Office-Department~~ shall select and enter into an agreement with a statewide organization that has population-specific service experience to provide or cause to be provided supportive services and shelter to those households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic or sexual violence. ***DELETE PAGE 16, LINES 2-9*** If the statewide organization cannot fulfill its responsibilities under this section, the Department shall work with another entity to ensure that there is not a gap in services."

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with the committee throughout the session.



Summary of Vermont Network's Current Homelessness Services

Thank you to the House Committee on Human Services for your support last year of the establishment of a grant to service victims of domestic and sexual violence within the Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP).

In SFY26, the Vermont Network began its role as the statewide DV/SV administrator for HOP funding. The Vermont Network received \$4,438,950 in funding. From the total award, \$3,929,079 (89%) is then sub-granted to eight member organizations that operate 13 physical shelters for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. These awards include funding for shelter operations, motel (shelter overflow) funding, and essential services. The remaining funds support a statewide financial assistance program that we operate, support a separate, confidential and HMIS compliant database used by our Member Organizations to track clients served and provide some limited administrative resources.

Under this grant agreement, the Vermont Network is tasked with the financial and programmatic monitoring of subgrantees, as well as providing specialized training and technical assistance to shelter programs. We are also currently working with the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to transition to a statewide DV/SV shelter overflow pool. This will ensure that survivors in every community in the state can access emergency stays when their local domestic violence shelter is at capacity or when a shelter is not an appropriate setting for their needs.

We work closely with OEO on this transition and will continue to do so. This close partnership is essential to the program's success. This new arrangement provides mutual benefit. The State of Vermont has one grantee to monitor and support – rather than nine individual grantees. Subgrantees of the Vermont Network work with us directly to access technical assistance and training, ensuring that services for victims of domestic and sexual violence are consistent across the state.