



## **End Homelessness Vermont**

[www.endhomelessnessvt.org](http://www.endhomelessnessvt.org)

### **Brenda Siegel Testimony to House Human Services Committee Budget Adjustment Request - End Homelessness Vermont 1/8/2026**

For the record, I am Brenda Siegel, the Executive Director of End Homelessness Vermont. End Homelessness Vermont is requesting \$100,000 in the Budget Adjustment for disability-focused case management, service navigation, technical assistance, and concrete supports. I want to note that we will be making a request in the FY27 budget, but we need this funding now to cover a critical gap that threatens our ability to serve Vermont's highest-need households.

#### **About Our Work**

End Homelessness Vermont is a lived experience expert-led organization providing trauma-informed, Housing First-based services to people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity across Vermont. We work primarily with people living with disabilities, although we do answer every call or email and support people in multiple ways throughout the year. Our clients live with significant disabilities or medical complexities. Because of this, they have unique needs when being exited to outside, in communicating with Economic Services, in housing case management and more. We are the only organization in the state that provides this specialized service and it has proven to be a very successful model.

#### **Why This Gap Exists**

In both April and July of this year, a large number of medically complex Vermonters and people living with disabilities were exited from GA Emergency Housing or needed additional support, essentially draining our funds. These funds are necessary to stabilize and sustain this existing critical part of the homelessness service infrastructure.

#### **The Difference Funding Makes**

When clients are exited from shelter, their needs can range from generators to run medical equipment, to cots for those who can't get to the ground, to rapid sheltering that prevents catastrophic outcomes. All of our clients need service coordination and navigation not just until they are permanently housed, but throughout their housing to maintain support for their medical needs. We do not turn people away—we work with clients for whom traditional case management has not been successful.

When we have the resources to provide this specialized disability support, the outcomes are transformative. When we don't, the consequences can be catastrophic and more costly than addressing the crisis up front.

## **What Success Looks Like**

You often hear from the me the catastrophic outcomes, of which there are many. I would like to take this moment to share what success can look like in our work.

Our client Ernest, in Rutland, has muscular dystrophy. He seemingly had no options. We were told that he was "refusing services." It turns out the problem was more complex. He could not get to the door without help, so what looked like "refusing" to a provider or agency trying to help him was actually a need for specialized support for his disability. We have worked with him since 2023. In December, he finally made it to permanent housing. We continue to work with him on medical needs, helping him navigate living in permanent housing and making sure this is successful.

In the last 14 months we were able to support 80 people with complex needs to become permanently housed, with only 2 returning to homelessness. That is a 97.5% housing retention rate. And of the two that returned to homelessness, one has already been housed again.

## **What We Did in 2025**

In addition, in 2025, we answered more than 3,000 hotline calls and responded to hundreds of referrals. We were in front of the Human Services Board more than 250 times while representing people with disabilities in fair hearings as non-attorney advocates. We supported more than 250 people with ongoing support in assisting them with emergency housing, 500 people ongoing in other capacities, and worked with providers across the state.

## **What This Funding Will Do**

This \$100,000 represents a fraction of our total need. These funds will provide disability-focused case management for medically complex clients, service navigation and coordination from crisis through housing stability, technical assistance, and concrete supports—the tangible resources that prevent catastrophic outcomes and when there is enough, more of our clients will have wonderful outcomes, like Ernest's.

Without this funding, Vermonters living with disabilities and complex needs who are experiencing homelessness will have even less of the support that they need. We have been operating on a shoestring budget and yet we are successful in getting clients housed without a return to homelessness. Imagine how much we could do if we were funded at similar levels or even at a fraction of the levels that most of our partners are.

Again, End Homelessness Vermont is requesting \$100,000 in the Budget Adjustment for disability-focused case management, service navigation, technical assistance, and concrete supports. I ask the Committee to support this request.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today. I am happy to take any questions.