



End Homelessness Vermont
www.endhomelessnessvt.org

EHVT FY27 Appropriations Request Testimony: Brenda Siegel

For the record, I am Brenda Siegel, the Executive Director of End Homelessness Vermont. End Homelessness Vermont is requesting \$611,625 in the FY27 budget for disability-focused case management, service navigation, technical assistance, and concrete supports for Vermonters experiencing homelessness with complex medical needs and disabilities. We need this funding to sustain what is, for many Vermonters, their only option.

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, in permanent housing, 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.

Peer Led Support Services

Peer advocates bring an irreplaceable understanding of the systems, barriers, and experiences our clients are navigating — and that means ensuring they have the training, tools, and resources necessary to do that work at the highest level. It is this model, and the relationships it makes possible, that drives our success with people who are less well-served by traditional approaches.

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.

Here is a snapshot of some of the people that we are working with. This is not the full picture:

At least 45 Families With Children

At least 50 Vermonters older than 60, many older than 70

At least 65 Vermonters older than 50

At least 20 Vermonters age 18 to 24

People Living With Disabilities Include:

At least 15 people on oxygen

At least 17 living with schizophrenia

And countless people in wheelchairs and with significant mobility challenges. When we went to count, it was a very high number, and I did not want to give you an inaccurate one.

We also are working with many clients who just had surgery, need surgery, have severe heart conditions, psychiatric disabilities, cancer people in recovery, children with disabilities and the list goes on. We can get you a break down of demographics if the committee would like.

What Success Looks Like

I want to share a little about what success looks like in our work.

Just yesterday, we supported a family in their first days of homelessness — a mother about to go into labor, two small children, one with nonverbal autism and one with severe asthma, and both adults living with disabilities. Through no fault of their own, they missed their hotel check-in due to transportation issues and received a period of ineligibility, which means 30 days without hotel access. Through the fair hearing process, we secured housing pending — keeping a mother in active labor and two children with disabilities from being outside.

When we met our client Heidi, referred to us by another provider due to her complex needs, she was having multiple seizures a day. When she exhausted her 80 days of emergency housing, she was sleeping in a car through the hot summer, her health deteriorating. We found her an apartment through one of the landlords we frequently work with, worked through a tight budget with her, coordinated support from her sisters, and connected her to services in her new area. She moved into permanent housing late last summer. Since then, her landlord has moved her into a larger apartment, we continue to support her ongoing disability needs — and her seizures are now much less frequent.

You have heard many of those stories this session — Ernest, Darron, and Joy, all of whom had been told they were refusing services, but the truth was that they needed to be heard. They are all thriving in housing now.

Success can also look like someone who could not engage in services due to their disability, connecting with our peer-led support team who meets them where they are, and taking their first step toward accessing choices for care. In our work, successes are both big and small.

In the last 14 months, we housed 80 people with complex needs with only 2 returning to homelessness — and one of those has already been re-housed. That is a 97.5% housing retention rate. These are Vermont's highest-need households, and this is what is possible when they have the right support.

Why This Funding Is Critical

This \$611,625 funds our peer-led direct services — what we need to sustain them. 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 Heidi's, Ernest's, Darron's, Joy's, and so many others.

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 running a statewide program on a fraction of what most providers receive, and the outcomes speak for themselves. With adequate funding, we could sustain our services, support many more positive outcomes, and continue to be as rapidly available for Vermonters who need this support as we are today.

How Many Will Be Served

This funding will enable us to:

- Answer 3,500 hotline calls annually
- Provide light-touch support to 2,500 individuals
- Provide ongoing disability services to 600 people
- Provide intensive case management to 300 people with the highest level of medical need and disabilities

With my testimony, I have included a budget breakdown, a letter from our Fiscal Sponsor and some information about fiscal sponsorship as I know that it is a new concept for some, as well as our registration with the Secretary of State's office.

Fiscal sponsorship is a formal arrangement in which an established 501(c)(3) nonprofit provides administrative and financial oversight for a project or organization. This allows the fiscally sponsored organization to receive tax-deductible donations and grants, including state and federal government funding, just as a 501(c)(3) would. It is a common and well-established model used by organizations across the country.

It is also worth noting that as an organization whose role includes advocacy on behalf of people living with disabilities, we have not had access to some of the funding streams available to other providers. We have continued to do this work anyway, because the need is too great and the outcomes too important to step back from. The work at End Homelessness Vermont saves lives

and gets people into permanent housing — two of the central goals of this committee's work on homelessness.

Again, End Homelessness Vermont is requesting \$611,625 in the FY27 budget for disability-focused case management, service navigation, technical assistance, and concrete supports. We have been running a statewide program on a fraction of what most providers receive, and the outcomes speak for themselves. I ask the Committee to support this request. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today. I am happy to take any questions.