

**Office of the Mayor
City of Burlington, Vermont**

RE: Legislative Support for CVOEO Community Resource Center – FY27 Budget Request

Dear Members of the Vermont Legislature,

On behalf of the City of Burlington, I write to express strong support for the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity's (CVOEO) request for **\$650,000 in State Fiscal Year 2027 funding** to sustain the Community Resource Center (CRC) and its homeless outreach operations. This investment is not only justified, it is essential given the **historic and ongoing homelessness crisis in Chittenden County**.

Burlington is at the epicenter of a housing emergency that has pushed more residents into unsheltered homelessness than at any point in recent history. In this context, the CRC has become a **critical piece of the region's public safety, public health, and housing response infrastructure**, serving an average of **131 individuals per day**, more than half of whom are unsheltered.

The CRC is far more than a drop-in center. It is a frontline stabilization resource that **reduces pressure on emergency rooms, first responders, and the criminal legal system** through on-site de-escalation, overdose response, and direct pathways to housing and shelter.

In the past year alone, CRC staff have served **2,152 unique individuals**, provided more than **36,000 meals**, and supported **168 people in transitioning from homelessness to shelter or permanent housing**.

This work is taking place amid extraordinary challenges. Construction-related displacement of the CRC's physical space, a severe shortage of affordable housing, and long shelter waitlists have combined into what CVOEO rightly describes as a "perfect storm." Despite these conditions, CRC staff continue to provide lifesaving services, including **overdose reversals, crisis intervention, and safe refuge for individuals fleeing violence**—often when no other option exists.

Importantly, the population served by the CRC reflects the depth and complexity of this crisis. **Sixty percent of guests live with a formal disability**, including mental health, physical health, and substance use disorders, and many face multiple, compounding barriers to housing stability.

These are precisely the residents most at risk of falling through gaps when systems are under-resourced.

From the City's perspective, funding the CRC is both a **moral imperative and a sound fiscal decision**. The CRC prevents avoidable emergencies, supports public order, and helps stabilize lives at a fraction of the cost of hospitalization, incarceration, or repeated crisis response. It is one of the few places where individuals experiencing chronic homelessness consistently report feeling safe, seen, and supported.

As Vermont considers its FY27 budget, I urge you to recognize the CRC as an indispensable partner in the State's response to homelessness, behavioral health needs, and community safety. Sustained State investment will allow this program to maintain staffing, continue outreach across **31 sites**, and remain a reliable lifeline during a period of unprecedented need.

Additionally, and critically, the CRC has complimented the City's extreme cold weather sheltering efforts, providing respite to people who are unable to access other drop-in centers for warmth, food, supplies, and daytime shelter. Just this week, the CRC served as the only daytime sheltering program in Chittenden County in response to windchills as low as -30 degrees. This location fills a crucial gap in our

county's ability to provide both emergency and upstream support to our most vulnerable community members. Without this one-stop resource, countless households would have access to basic needs and community connection.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to supporting Vermonters experiencing homelessness. The City of Burlington stands ready to continue working with the Legislature and community partners to address this crisis with urgency, compassion, and accountability.

Sincerely,

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

Mayor

City of Burlington, Vermont