



VERMONT  
COMMUNITY ACTION  
PARTNERSHIP

- ❖ Tom Donahue, BROC Community Action (BROC)
- ❖ Alison Calderara, Capstone Community Action
- ❖ Paul Dragon Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)
- ❖ Jenna O'Farrell, Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA)
- ❖ Joshua Davis, Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)

## Testimony of Jenna O'Farrell, NEKCA, on behalf of VCAP February 18, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for considering all of these requests at a time when you are feeling the pressure to reduce spending. We at the Community Action Agencies appreciate your commitment to working towards the best outcomes for the people of Vermont, and we share that commitment. What we see every day in our communities are people who need our State to step into leadership and provide resources that can help them achieve economic stability. The Community Action Agencies are honored to partner with the State of Vermont to help the people we serve achieve the best outcomes for themselves and their families. In order to do that, we need to be adequately funded to provide the services that the State expects us to deliver to the people in our communities.

To that end, we have a large budget request that would be shared among our 5 Community Action Agencies. Our request has a few different "buckets." I am highlighting several pieces of our request here.

### **Financial Capabilities: +\$1,150,000 (Financial Coaching, Microbusiness Development Program, VITA)**

As Vermont's anti-poverty strategists, Financial Capabilities Programs are backbone services offered by every Community Action Agency in the state. Over the years, we have worked with thousands of low-income Vermonters to help them build asset wealth through homeownership, business ownership and savings, and we also help them to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Our financial capabilities programs are highly effective anti-poverty strategies because they build long-term capacity, not just short-term relief. Microbusiness and personal coaching help participants acquire savings and improve or acquire credit that supports lasting economic independence and financial reserves. Free Tax Filing in our VITA program ensure families receive essential tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. These assets protect families from setbacks and enable long-term progress

### **Supporting Landlords, Tenants & Manufactured Homeowners: +\$1,300,000 (Landlord Liaisons, Fair Housing Program & Mobile Home Program)**

Landlord Liaisons help both landlords and tenants, as an objective person who can resolve issues between the parties. Liaisons can help tenants build a plan to pay their rent, take care of their unit, and be successful in their home. They can also help tenants address issues that might arise like needed repairs. Liaisons can help landlords when a tenant is not responding or may be causing an issue in the building. Our Fair Housing program offers a Preferred Renter Certificate, which can open opportunities to a person who has been having trouble securing housing. It also provides information and resources to both tenants and landlords. Our Mobile Home Program provides outreach and advocacy for manufactured homeowners. Approximately six percent of Vermont's housing units are mobile homes with about 10,691 located on owned land and about 9,794 located on leased land. According to the 2024 Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Registry, Vermont has 238 mobile home parks comprising 7,112 lots, 6,768 mobile homes, and 344 vacant lots. We work with mobile home residents throughout the state of Vermont to defend their interests and ensure they are able to maintain their housing. We recognize that mobile homes are an important kind of affordable housing for many Vermonters and our goal is to keep mobile homes safe and affordable for Vermonters.



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### **Case Management +\$1,500,000 (Case Management for Homelessness, Housing Retention & Housing Navigation)**

Case Management is a client-centered, holistic approach that coordinates services to help people secure stable housing and achieve stability. Case Managers assess needs, create personalized plans, provide advocacy and connect clients to services and supports. We know we are not meeting the need for case management, and this request will not fulfill all the need we see, but it will help to increase capacity across the state for Case Management services. Permanent Housing Navigators support clients in reaching their long-term housing goals. They help to assess their clients' barriers and then work with the clients to overcome the barriers and transition into permanent, sustainable housing. Housing Navigators can help with filling out applications for various subsidies and supports, federal or state benefit programs, or other resources, services and supports. Housing Navigators can also help if something happens to jeopardize the client's housing situation.

### **Concrete Supports +\$1,250,000**

This funding would be shared among the 5 Community Action Agencies to provide direct support in times of acute need for individuals or households. All 5 Community Action Agencies receive federal funding for concrete supports and they also fundraise for this critical flexible funding. Still, the need is greater than the available resources. Concrete Supports can prevent homelessness by addressing an acute economic barrier before a household reaches a crisis situation. Concrete Supports can also help when a person is experiencing homelessness by providing needed supplies, clothing, hygiene kits, etc.