

Hello,

Thank you, Chair Clarkson for your time and willingness to serve on the Act 69 Committee and for bringing these recommendations to the committee..... and thank you everyone on this Committee for your support for our families and our young people with Intellectual and developmental disabilities!

We appreciate this opportunity to explain why we are making these requests!

My name is Marla McQuiston, I have a son with Down syndrome who is 28, my husband and I are 68 and 70, and we are hoping to set up a long term service supported living situation for the future. We are part of a group of 175 families who are all looking for that situation. We are not all looking for the exact same setup, but the Research study done in 2023 showed a need for over 600 units statewide immediately. We know many families in the same situation who are not part of our group, mostly because they don't have the bandwidth.

The 3 items we are asking for this session are:

First - the money to start a pipeline to provide funds - essentially seed money thru VHCB, for developers who can build the housing needed. This money will leverage other funds, and grants available for housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We asked for \$10M a year for 5 years to get to \$50 M and support a good chunk of the units. I noticed that your bill has \$3M :) and while we understand the very tight budget and lots of different housing needed, we were also told in the last few years that it would be better to have a regular amount put into this housing every year, rather than having us come every year with a different single project. So it would be great if you could ask that this amount would be given annually.

This housing is needed because parents are aging. As you probably remember, my friend Elizabeth started this group because her husband, Bruce Campbell died unexpectedly at age 67 and she was extremely worried that something would happen to her, leaving their son Jesse to be cared for by his younger brother.

We all think like this and some of us stay awake at night worrying. My son is fairly capable and fairly adaptable, he only needs support for transportation, managing all medical, money and finance management, and employment and activity schedules. Only ... but he would not do as well if he had to change homes every few years, as often happens with SLP. Some of our sons and daughters have much higher needs - needing 24/7 supervisions and supports for eating, bathing, toileting etc. This is more than is reasonable to expect from a single Shared Living Provider. And of course, these young people want to live in the community where they grew up, know people and have regular work and social involvement.

Federal Medicaid says that they should have a choice of where to live and what type of situation to live in. Right now Vermont mostly has Shared Living Providers for those with higher support needs. There are a few new models available but they are already full with waiting lists. We need more projects asap.

The second ASK is for a dedicated staff person at DAIL, someone with deep and broad knowledge of housing development, and the processes for helping people gain housing. We need someone who will be able to create a system that will educate the agency staff about housing possibilities, eligibility, applications, systems etc. Then the staff can educate individuals and families, provide step by step advice, counseling and supports to access housing. The present system has relied on SLP for so long that agency staff don't know that anything else exists or should exist and certainly don't educate their clients.

For years individuals have not been told that they should apply for a Section 8 voucher when they

turn 18 to get on the waiting list. Families and individuals should be given all the information available so that they can make informed decisions. The Ohio Developmental Disabilities website is amazing in the amount of info that is right there easy to see and understand, with choices and avenues explained in detail. We are asking for a position that will work to make the changes needed to provide that complete information and support to individuals.

The third request is for an Advisory Council to make sure that the recommendations from the Act 69 Committee will be worked on and make progress. There were 13 total recommendations the Committee felt needed to move forward together to achieve progress on the creation of 600 units. 4 have been brought to the Legislature and the rest are moving forward within DAIL and with the help of VHCB, VDHCD, VSHA. The recommendations are dependent on each other, so that if one doesn't move it will hinder the others. We see the Advisory council as collecting the progress reports and making sure the recommended actions keep moving forward - like the legislative mom checking the homework:)

We know there are many housing needs in the state now, we would like to remind you that in moving this housing forward you are helping to keep more individuals from homelessness. The majority of homeless are people with a disability. Housing also helps individuals avoid expensive emergency care that is often a side effect of the lack of a stable home. Please help move these recommendations forward.

Thank you - I appreciate your time considering our requests.