



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

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TO: Senate Health and Welfare Committee
RE: H. 938 Rental Assistance Section
FROM: Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
Susan Aranoff, J.D. Senior Planner and Policy Analyst
DATE: May 7, 2026

Amendment to AHS Amendment

The rental assistance created in the Bridge Rental Assistance Program needs to be available to Vermonters with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive Medicaid-funded Home and Community Based Services and other Vermonters with disabilities who receive services that often prevent them from becoming homeless, but do not prevent them from entering institutions, including nursing homes.

Please add the following clause to ensure the rental assistance created in this section can serve individuals AHS serves, who are leaving correctional or other institutions, or who are in nursing homes or at risk of nursing home placement.

As it is written now, all of the rental assistance created in this section will be afforded to people who are unhoused.

Vermont has longstanding and neglected obligations to provide permanent stable housing to individuals with disabilities receiving Medicaid-funded services.

* * * Vermont Rental Assistance Bridge Program * * *

Sec. 11. VERMONT RENTAL ASSISTANCE BRIDGE PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Rental Assistance Bridge Program is established within the Vermont State Housing Authority for the purpose of linking households who require rental assistance to permanent housing when the household does not otherwise have access to relevant U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rental assistance. The Program shall be accessible to eligible clients served by each of the Agency of Human Services' departments.

(b) The Program shall be available to a household for not more than 24 months and shall not provide the full amount of the household's rental payment. The Program shall not provide the full amount of the household's rental payment and shall not be a permanent voucher. The duration of Program assistance shall be temporary and determined based on the specific needs of eligible clients, as established by the Agency of Human Services and the Vermont State Housing Authority pursuant to subsection (d) of this section. Program payments shall be made directly from the Vermont State Housing Authority to a household's landlord.

(c) Program priority shall be given to current recipients of the HOME Program, established pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 321(b)(2), who have not yet reached 24 months of rental assistance. The Program shall be accessible to eligible clients served by each of the Agency of Human Services' departments, with priority given to those exiting homelessness, institutionalized , or at risk of institutionalization.

BACKGROUND ON THE NEED FOR RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES WHO RECEIVE MEDICAID FUNDED SERVICES

THE ROAD HOME REPORT

A committee created by the legislature under Act 69 of 2025, Section 5 released a report, The Road Homeⁱ, which lays out a 13-point Plan for Creating Permanent, Affordable, and Service-Supported Housing for Vermonters Who Participate in Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS).

See: https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/The-Road-Home_Act-69-FINAL.pdf

As The Road Home details, the DDS system is overly dependent upon individuals living either with family caregivers (39%) or in an adult foster care arrangement called “shared living” (also 39%). These arrangements can be excellent options for people receiving DDS, but they are not appropriate for everyone. Moreover, Vermont has outstripped its capacity to recruit shared living providers, and it has pushed the limits of what aging family members can reasonably provide.

Federal Medicaid rules require that people receiving HCBS have a choice in where they receive these supports. While other states have added to their stock of varied residential settings over the years, Vermont did not. We now face a shortage of housing for DDS participants, including apartments with onsite support in larger affordable housing complexes and small group living opportunities.

Legislation this session will make progress toward the recommendations in The Road Home, provided lawmakers make resources available.

Key Legislative Recommendations

1. **Rental Assistance** for Individuals receiving HCBS for an Intellectual or Developmental Disability: A minimum of 30 state-funded vouchers are needed for projects already in development for DDS participants. The Road Home estimates that over time, \$1 to \$2 million/year will be needed for state-funded rental assistance for DDS participants;
2. **Capital** to Develop Service Supported Housing;
3. A **Housing Specialist** at the Department for Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living;
4. An **Advisory Committee** to oversee the timely development of affordable service-supported housing for DDS participants: Additional planning and leadership are needed to address the housing need of this population. S. 328 would create this committee at little to no cost.

The unique role of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

The Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council (hereafter “VTDDC”) is a statewide board created by the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (hereafter “the DD Act”), first adopted by Congress in 1970. An estimated 86,000 Vermonters experience a developmental disability as defined by the DD Act, with approximately 5,100 receiving Medicaid-funded, home and community-based support (HCBS) through the Developmental Disabilities Services System of Care or in some cases, the Choices for Care Program.

VTDDC is charged under federal law with engaging at the state level in “advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities that... contribute to the coordinated, consumer-and-family-centered, consumer-and-family directed, comprehensive system

that includes needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.”¹

In addition to our federal mandate, we are commenting in our unique role within the Agency of Human Services (AHS). As per our signed assurances with AHS, the VTDDC advises AHS on quality strategies as they pertain to people with developmental disabilities.² The Assurances also protect the VTDDC’s right to advocate free from any interference from AHS. This right to advocate protects the VTDDC’s ability to speak on behalf of its constituents even – and especially- when the VTDDC’s position is at odds with AHS policies or positions.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. 42 USC 15001 et. seq.

² “Section M. The Council will participate in the planning, design or redesign, and monitoring of State quality assurance systems that affect individuals with developmental disabilities.” Signed by AHS Secretary Samuelson.