



## 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 6, 2026

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 938- An act relating to establishing a forensic facility for certain criminal justice-involved persons.

Friendly Amendment to AHS proposed Amendment

The rental assistance created in this section 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.

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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.

## **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.”<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. 42 USC 15001 et. seq.

<sup>2</sup> “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.