



Senate Health and Welfare - Public Comments/ Testimony

The Community Resource Center (CRC)

April 11th, 2025

Hello, my name is Paul Dragon, and I am the Executive Director of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity. We have 10 programs that focus on crisis services as well as long-term solutions to poverty. In the past 5 years we have opened several shelters to address this crisis of homelessness.

We opened the Community Resource Center or CRC in Burlington four years ago following the state closure of the Holiday Inn Shelter which we also operated. Each year we have done this with one-time funds from different state sources, which is stressful for our organization and particularly for our staff.

The CRC is the largest site in the state for people who are unsheltered. Each day at the CRC you will find a long line of people waiting at our door having spent a night outside. We had several people come to the CRC this winter with frostbite and one person had to have their finger amputated.

In 2024:

- The CRC saw over 3100 unique individuals who utilized our services over 32,000 times.
- The data also shows that there are high rates of disability and large age and racial disparities in the people we serve along.

In addition to food and essential needs we enroll people in Coordinated Entry and support their shelter and housing goals.

Our team has saved lives:

- Calling emergency services weekly.
- Administering Narcan to stop overdoses monthly.
- Providing CPR several times over the past year.

The Mayor of Burlington said: *"The CRC serves as a vital piece of the City's response to homelessness, public health and public safety and is the most highly utilized point of connection for unsheltered homelessness, at times serving over 200 people per day."*

We respectfully request \$550,000 to operate the CRC or we will close as of July 1st. We would like this funding to be annual with cost-of-living increases. Please note that each year CVOEO provides over \$200,000 of its own funding for food, groceries and essential items.

Lastly, we often find small notes to our staff and here is the latest: *You all are a blessing, and I appreciate all you do.*" Thank you so much for your time today and all you do.