

## Vermont Care Partners – SHW Budget Testimony for FY27: April 4, 2026

My name is Amy Johnson, and I represent Vermont Care Partners - the statewide network of Designated and Specialized Service Agencies. Thank you for your ongoing support of our network. I'm here today to advocate for \$5.8M to support an inflationary increase to our community-based system of care

When the Brandon Training School closed, Vermont made a deliberate choice - to move away from institutionalization and invest in a community-based system of care. It was a promise. A promise that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities could live in their communities with the supports they need to thrive. A promise that when someone experiences a mental health crisis, help would meet them where they're at. A promise that Vermonters struggling with substance use could access treatment close to home. And a promise that children and adults alike could have access to care that keeps them healthy, supported, and connected to their communities.

These services are not optional. They are statutory responsibilities. And our agencies deliver them every day, in every region, on behalf of the state. Budgets are not just numbers. They are statements of priority. The Governor's proposed budget includes approximately \$4 million in reductions across network-wide and individual agency programs. And it includes no inflationary increase for community-based providers. No increase is erosion.

More than 80% of our budgets are personnel. When wages, benefits, transportation, and operational costs rise - and they are - holding funding flat means the system shrinks. Wait times grow. Workforce instability increases. Programs shutter. Access diminishes.

We are encouraged to be included in the House version of the FY27 budget; in a challenging budget year, we recognize and appreciate the significant effort it took to secure funding to support our network. However, the allocated funding represents only half of what is needed to sustain our network of DAs and SSAs and to fully support our community-based system of care.

These essential services must be funded in a way that preserves access and upholds the state's responsibility to the people who depend on them. Stability is a choice. We respectfully ask you to choose it and help us to keep the promise made to Vermonters. Thank you.

Best,  
Amy Johnson  
Director of Legislative Affairs and Public Policy  
Vermont Care Partners

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