Dear Madame Chair Wood, Madame Chair Lyons,

House Committee on Human Services and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare,

The Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) representing over 180 families, offers the following comments regarding the need for state funded housing vouchers for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who qualify for Home & Community Based Services (HCBS). Our adult children will never live independently and have a variety of high needs, including those who require 24/7 care.

The distribution of housing vouchers/Rental assistance to people with I/DD has historically been minimal. Individuals with I/DD have mostly been housed in adult foster care (SLP - Shared Living Providers) thus living in the provider's home. In spite of the requirement for housing choice in Vermont's Developmental Disabilities Act 2014, which states "every Vermont citizen with a developmental disability must have the opportunity to live with family or in a home of his or her choice" and "to make choices which affect his or her life," there has been little support by the Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) to offer opportunities for living in rental homes where individuals would need a housing voucher.

Now that Individuals with I/DD and their families are seeking to access choices in housing, they are finding that there are no choices, other than foster care. There are currently a few options being created by private nonprofits or through the efforts of parent groups. These housing options will need vouchers/Rental Assistance to be able to cover operational costs. There are presently about 11-15 units in 2 projects in the pipeline that will need vouchers in the next year and they will be unoccupied if the intended tenants cannot access housing vouchers.

The Developmental Disabilities Council commissioned report "Service Supported Housing for Vermonters with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities" 2023, created in accordance with Vermont Act 186 identified that over 600 housing units must be developed to meet the need. Barely 10- 20 units have been developed annually. Since the Federal government is also restricting funding for Section 8 Housing vouchers it is important for the state to provide this state funded assistance for adults with I/DD. More housing is desperately needed; individuals are living with parents who range from late 60's-90's and will not be able to care for their family members for much longer.

DDHI advocated well for the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) to bring state funded

vouchers online to bring into parity the state vouchers that have been available for DMH clients for over 10 years. This parity was the intended outcome of Act 143 that passed in June 2026. However, AHS has not delegated any vouchers to DDSD for adults with I/DD.

Little is being done to move individuals with I/DD who are inappropriately housed in the hospital emergency or assisted living, into appropriate housing. People with I/DD are not eligible to access Coordinated Entry because they are not "on the street". BUT they are just as homeless and continue to be disregarded by the Agency of Human Services.

The Road Home report makes 13 recommendations for actions needed to create the 600+ units. The report states that all 13 actions are needed in concert, not sequentially - making vouchers available for Rental Assistance for individuals with I/DD is one recommendation. It is one that will help to fulfill the process for the State to care for the most vulnerable Vermonters, as was promised when Brandon was closed.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your ongoing support of DDHI families seeking service supported housing for their young adults in the communities in where they choose to live.

Collins Twing, Jenn Townley, Laurie Mumley, Katie Tormey, Karen Price, Marla McQuiston

for Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative