



February 17, 2022

TO: The House Committee on Health Care
FROM: Better Bennington Corporation Board of Directors
Re: Pathways Vermont Housing First Bennington Expansion Proposal

Dear Chair Lippert and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Better Bennington Corporation, please accept this letter of support of Pathways Vermont's proposal to expand Housing First services in Bennington County. Our Executive Director, Jenny Dewar, listened to Mr. Rogers' passionate and informative presentation about the project. She brought it to the Board and we agree that this proposal would impact our community in a profound and positive way. We agree and wholeheartedly join the Bennington Select Board in their recommendation to support this proposal.

Bennington County has one of the highest rates of chronic homelessness in the state and a disproportionate need relative to population size. There are approximately 70 households experiencing chronic homelessness in Bennington County, as documented by our local Coordinated Entry team. We desperately need help and clearly the expansion of the Housing First program would make a much-needed impact in the lives of our residents experiencing homelessness in Bennington County. This clearly benefits the welfare of the community overall. The Better Bennington Corporation also recognizes the importance of supporting the program for our beautiful downtown.

We hope that the committee will honor the request of \$390,000 from the legislature to expand its contract to bring Housing First services to Bennington County. Support of an additional 30 households is incredibly significant to our community impacting the rate of chronic homelessness and the intervention provided is something Bennington County sorely needs.

Thank you for your committee's consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Plaisance, president; Michael Keene, vice-president; Shelley Colvin, treasurer; Michael McDonough; Jonathan Cooper; Nancy Koziol; Edie Sawitsky; Jenifer Prouty Hoffman