

To: House Committee on Health Care
From: Alyssum Vermont, Another Way Vermont, Pathways Vermont, and Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
Date: April 5th, 2022
Subject: S.195 Written Testimony

Dear House Committee on Health Care:

Thank you for the invitation to testify on [S.195](#), an act relating to the certification of mental health peer support specialists. We are submitting written testimony in lieu of testifying in person.

While we support [S.195, as recommended by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee](#), we do **not** support [S.195](#), as passed by the Senate, because the Senate eliminated the mandate to create four new peer respites and removed critical funding for both the four, new peer respites (\$2,000,000) and the development and administration of a statewide mental health peer specialist certification program (\$525,000).

A statewide mental health peer certification program cannot be developed and administered without funding.

[S.195, as recommended by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee](#), would increase the options for individuals in mental distress to include peer support services and peer respites in a quantity sufficient to meet the demand. Currently, the one peer-operated respite in the State, Alyssum, operates at 92 percent capacity and has a five-day wait list. Alyssum guests hail from 11 of Vermont's 14 counties.

With [S.195, as recommended by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee](#), the state would add much needed community-based, recovery-oriented, mental health resources to the State's continuum of mental health care to relieve pressure on our emergency departments, community mental health agencies, and inpatient psychiatric hospitals.

We strongly urge the House Committee on Health Care to restore the \$2,525,000 in funding as well as the mandate to create four, new peer respites in the coming fiscal year.

Thank you for your consideration.

