

# PLEASE SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 728

## *We, the undersigned, support updating the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Act.*

When the Developmental Disabilities Act was first adopted, Vermont had just closed the Brandon Training School. Community-based services for people with developmental disabilities were new and the program was small. Today, Developmental Services has a \$171 million budget and serves over 4,000 Vermonters.

Every three years, the Department creates a System of Care Plan for developmental services. The Plan contains two decisions that are life-changing for people with developmental disabilities: (1) Who will receive services; and (2) What services will be provided.

In recent years the Plan has been changed annually, and sometimes more frequently. The result has been a gradual erosion of services over 10 years. Eligibility categories have narrowed. Needs that used to be considered a priority, including supports to prevent regression or to stay employed, are no longer covered. By the State's own estimates, 70% of people who meet Vermont's definition of a developmental disability do not receive any support.

While there is a process for stakeholder input, the Commissioner is empowered by the Developmental Disabilities Act to make these critical decisions **without legislative review**.

### The changes to the Act would:

- Create a System of Care Study Committee to examine the process by which people with developmental disabilities and their families receive state-funded services, including the manner in which the System of Care Plan is created and reviewed prior to taking effect.
- Strengthen expectations for quality assurance and monitoring.
- Make annual reporting requirements clear, including the requirement that the Department consider the needs of individual who are not receiving services and how this is impacting their lives and their families.

**These are simple and sensible changes that invite the legislature's involvement, provide for a more transparent decision-making process, and signal respect for Vermont's community-based system and the people it supports.**

**We look forward to working with the legislature to meet these goals.**

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