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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact:

Amy Johnson

Director of Legislative Affairs and Public Policy

Vermont Care Partners

Email: amy@vermontcarepartners.org

**Vermont Care Partners' Statement on the Trump Administration's Executive Order on Homelessness**

Vermont Care Partners - the Designated and Specialized Service Agency Network that supports over 50,000 Vermonters with mental health, substance use, and intellectual and developmental disability needs – strongly condemns the recent executive order on homelessness issued by the Trump Administration on July 25, 2025. This order signals a federal shift toward approaches that increase institutionalization and surveillance of unhoused people, rather than investing in community-driven solutions and proven supports.

Our network is built on the belief that every individual deserves dignity, autonomy, and the opportunity to thrive in their community - not be criminalized, surveilled, or pushed into institutional settings. The executive order raises serious red flags for disability rights, civil liberties, and the future of Medicaid-funded services. It shifts focus away from community-based care and support toward more restrictive and institutional approaches and threatens to prioritize coercion over choice and containment over compassion.

We are deeply concerned about the detrimental effect this policy could have on people with I/DD, mental health needs, and those struggling with substance use, especially given the persistent and worsening housing crisis in Vermont. The legislature recently put forward significant efforts to advance regional collaboration and comprehensive planning to address homelessness and housing insecurity. Unfortunately, these efforts were halted at the highest level of state government, limiting the state's ability to build coordinated, effective responses. Meanwhile, Vermont continues to face a critical shortage of affordable housing and supportive services, placing vulnerable individuals and families at increasing risk. Directing federal energy toward institutional strategies rather than investing in long-term, community-based housing and care will only deepen these challenges and move us further away from sustainable solutions.

As our communities grapple with worsening homelessness, rising overdose deaths, and growing mental health needs, the response must be one of care and solidarity, not exclusion and institutional harm. We align with and support End Homelessness Vermont's response to this executive order and reaffirm our commitment to home and community-based solutions, high-quality substance use and mental health care, and full inclusion of people with disabilities. It is critical to recognize that individuals are struggling in our state - not because of personal failings, but because decades of systemic neglect and underinvestment

**A Statewide Network Supporting Vermonters to Lead Healthy and Satisfying Lives Community by Community**

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have left supports and services inadequate. This executive order doubles down on harmful stereotypes by criminalizing vulnerable individuals instead of fixing the broken system that fails to provide housing and care.

The Olmstead Act remains a foundational legal framework affirming the right of people with disabilities to live in the least restrictive, most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. This principle must guide all federal and state efforts addressing homelessness and housing, ensuring that supports are empowering rather than punitive, and that individuals are met with care and dignity, not exclusion or institutional harm.

“We urge Vermont’s leaders and federal partners to reject any policy that relies on criminalization or institutionalization,” said Simone Rueschemeyer, Executive Director of Vermont Care Partners. “What’s needed is lasting investment in community services, housing supports, and the dignity of every Vermonter, not a step backwards into failed systems of the past.”

We call on Vermont’s leaders to:

- Clearly reject the values and approaches reflected in this Executive Order
- Publicly reaffirm their commitment to permanent housing solutions, substance use supports, mental health care, and disability rights
- Prepare to protect Vermont’s community-based approach to care in the face of potential federal pressure or funding threats

This is not just about policy, it’s about people. If we allow this framing to take hold, we risk going backward. Vermont Care Partners will continue to advocate for a state where all people - regardless of housing status, disability, or diagnosis - can live with dignity, inclusion, and support in their own communities.

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