

[By Jenna Pizzi](#)

While visiting the Good Samaritan Haven in Barre, a homeless shelter, Rep. Peter Welch announced legislation Friday to increase the money that the shelter, and others in Vermont, would receive from the federal government.

The bill would more than double the minimum funding that small states like Vermont receive through Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness, or PATH.

Since the program was established in 1990, the amount rural states receive has stayed at \$300,000, while larger states have received increases in recent years.

"They are all holding things together with duct tape and baling wire," said Welch, D-Vt., at a news conference Friday morning.

Welch's bill would increase the funding to \$750,000 a year.

"We need to adjust that minimum to reflect inflation," said Welch. "This is really overdue."

Vermont and 21 other states currently receive the small-state minimum.

"It is a very small amount of money that would make a difference," said Welch.

PATH funding supports programs at the Brattleboro Area Drop In Center, NeighborWorks in West Rutland, the Good Samaritan Haven in Barre, Community Health Center in Burlington, Northeast Kingdom Community Action Group in Newport and Another Way in Montpelier.

Kimberly Woolaver, executive director of the Good Samaritan Haven, said even a small amount of money would make all the difference to the people who depend on its services.

"Staff is just so thin right now," said Woolaver, who has seven part-timers working at the shelter, some of them as volunteers.

One of those part-time staffers, Brenda Gouthier, is a former resident of the shelter. She said that if increased funding would allow case managers to spend more time with each guest, maybe those people would be back on their feet sooner.

Gouthier, who lived in the shelter for four months nearly eight years ago, said that after years of volunteering, the shelter has only recently found the money, through donations, to hire her part time.

Donations, Gouthier said, are the only way the shelter would be able to provide a hearty meal, hot shower and clean bed for the 27 residents every night.

"If it wasn't for these donations, I don't know where we would be," she said. "It's the things that we take for granted."

But recently, Woolaver said, donations have been on the decline.

"Donations are down because of (Tropical Storm) Irene," said Woolaver, who explained that people who might normally donate to their local shelter have instead allocated that money to a charity that supports flood victims. Some of those flood victims were also donors to the shelter, but are not able to give this year because of the added expenses associated with Irene.

Welch admitted that in tough budget times in Washington it may be difficult to get a bill like this

passed.

"That is no excuse," said Welch. "I am going to do my best."