

At the Good Samaritan Haven, Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) today announced bipartisan legislation to help rural states like Vermont secure additional funding to fight homelessness. Welch is introducing the bill with Rep. Geoff Davis (R-Ky.).

Welch's bill (H.R. 3141) would increase federal funding to Vermont for the federal Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program. Established in 1990, PATH provides funding for local efforts to help homeless, mentally ill Vermonters and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Vermont and 21 other states currently receive the minimum level of PATH funding of \$300,00 per year. While larger states have received increases in PATH funding in recent years, the formula used to calculate funding overlooks rural states. As a result, Vermont continues to receive the minimum level of funding, despite rising costs and increased demand for services. Welch's bill would raise the minimum level of funding for states from \$300,00 to \$750,000 per year.

"Homelessness is a human tragedy affecting communities across the country, especially in this tough economy," Welch said. "This bill will get much needed additional assistance to local agencies in Vermont who are performing heroic work fighting this endemic problem."

Brian Smith, Housing Program Administrator for the Vermont Department of Mental Health, said "The introduction of this legislation is the most important recognition of the work done to outreach and engage homeless mentally ill Vermonters by federally funded PATH providers. For more than twenty years, this program has not increased the original level of funding to smaller states. This action will initiate an opportunity to remedy that system challenge."

Administered by the Vermont Department of Mental Health, PATH funds support programs at:

- Brattleboro Drop-In Center, Brattleboro

- Neighborworks, West Rutland
- Good Samaritan Haven, Barre
- Community Health Center, Burlington
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action Group, Newport
- Green Mountain Support Group/Another Way, Montpelier

In July 2011, the PATH program at the Community Health Center in Burlington was recognized as one of four national organizations for Best Practice in Medical Home/Primary Care for Homeless Mentally Ill.