

**GMCB Public Comment****Submit Date:** 3/7/2023**Name:** Maria Moore**Topic:** Hospital Budget

**Comment:** Please consider this opportunity to increase mental health care capacity for Vermonters: A Permanent Home for Soteria House. Soteria House Vermont is the only program of its kind in the United States. Funded by the Vermont Department of Health in 2014, it is now in its 8th year of operation and is a viable and strong component of our Vermont mental health system of care, with a proven track record. Soteria House Vermont is a home-like environment providing alternatives to hospitalization for those experiencing non-consensus reality (sometimes referred to as psychosis) for the first time. Open to all Vermonters, it is currently located in Chittenden County. Soteria House residents, many of whom are young adults, may stay for 3-6 months or longer. Soteria provides a less restrictive setting and promotes self-expression and community as primary sources of healing. Antipsychotic medications are de-emphasized, although available through an on-staff psychiatrist. At Soteria, people move naturally through crises because they are in the right environment. Short-term outcomes are comparable to hospitalization, and long-term outcomes are far better. Creating a community consisting of former and current residents and staff members allows an approach of 'being with' people rather than 'doing to' them. Pathways Vermont is seeking funding to purchase and renovate a permanent home for our Soteria House program. This program has been utilizing a 5-bedroom rented property since it was opened in 2015. We have identified a Champlain Housing Trust property (141 Maple Street, Burlington) to purchase and renovate so that Soteria has a permanent home that will ensure its important ongoing place in the system of care. As a medication-neutral residence staffed 24/7, Soteria offers an alternative to the typical and costly path of hospitalization. The purchase and renovation of this property would help ensure Pathways Vermont's and Soteria's financial stability and longevity, allowing Pathways to continue offering this essential alternative form of mental health care for decades. Pathways has the opportunity to nearly double the capacity of our existing Soteria House program. This property would allow us to expand capacity from 5 to 9 beds, and to double our ADA-accessible capacity (from one to two beds). Increased capacity is critical to meet the overall demand within Vermont's mental healthcare system. In particular, it will provide meaningful alternative mental health treatment, which communities worldwide seek to model.

**Post Comment:** Yes