# Vermont's Homeless Crisis: The Struggles of Darron Phillips



**Vermont's Homeless Crisis: The Struggles of Darron Phillips**

**Berlin, Vt.** — Darron Phillips, a 59-year-old paraplegic, has been experiencing homelessness since losing his apartment in 2021. He spends his days in a wheelchair at a bus stop, battling various health issues including a severe eye infection, sores, and incontinence.

Vermont has the second-highest rate of homelessness in the United States. Phillips has cycled in and out of emergency housing, often facing eviction due to damages caused by his power wheelchair. Additionally, many shelters lack compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Earlier this month, Phillips was asked to leave a local emergency room after initially being allowed to stay, forcing him to spend the night at a bus stop. His lifeline—a CPAP mask for breathing—was non-functional due to dead batteries, and his hearing aids were also drained. Eating is a challenge for Phillips as he avoids it to prevent the need to use inaccessible restrooms.

Despite these difficulties, Phillips has managed to maintain his dignity. He acknowledges the added challenges faced by the disabled homeless, describing his experiences as exceedingly lonely and uncertain.

Advocates, including Brenda Siegel, executive director of End Homelessness Vermont, have been actively seeking adequate housing for Phillips. Siegel and her colleagues successfully located a handicapped-accessible room in Rutland after weeks of search. However, transporting Phillips posed another challenge. Ultimately, David Peake, the father of a Good Samaritan Haven worker, volunteered his pickup truck to transport Phillips.

Upon arrival at the Extol Inn in Rutland, filled largely with disabled individuals and domestic violence survivors, Phillips received a warm welcome. George Flannery, the manager, went out of his way to make the room accessible and provide a sense of community. This marks a rare moment of comfort and stability for Phillips, who expressed his gratitude to those assisting him.

Phillips wrote to Vermont legislators about the dire situation of disabled individuals facing homelessness, but solutions remain scarce. His story underscores the acute challenges faced by the disabled homeless population in Vermont.