

Dear Senator Lyons,

My name is Jane Catton, and I'm the CEO at Age Well, Vermont's largest Area Agency on Aging. Recently the House Committee on Appropriations supported adding \$1M to the Older Vermonters Nutrition Program, and while we are incredibly grateful, we know this will not cover the increased cost of meals that we are experiencing. We need \$3M to cover that shortfall.

With the growing number of older Vermonters, funding is no longer meeting the needs for home-delivered ("Meals on Wheels") and congregate meals. For example, the average reimbursement rate is \$5.44/meal (range \$3.80-\$6.96). The average cost of meals in 2021 was \$11.75/meal. We also know that approximately 15% of Older Vermonters experience some form of food insecurity and this statistic is on the rise, due to our aging population in VT. We also know that MOW is *a great* investment- as the cost of *one year on Meals on Wheels(MOW) is equivalent to the cost of one day in hospital or 10 days in a nursing home*. By supporting MOW we can address/reduce the overall cost of health care and invest in population health.

Please support this funding increase needed to ensure no older Vermonter is left without nutritious meals, which allows them to stay healthy and independent.

My best,
Jane Catton

Jane Catton, BScN, MSOL, RN, NE-BC
Chief Executive Officer