

**VERMONT
LEGAL
AID**

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE



Appropriation Request

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Who We Are

- Vermont Legal Aid is where Vermonters turn when they face a civil legal problem that threatens their rights, shelter, job, health or well-being.
 - We strive to advance fairness and justice in the civil legal system, address the social and economic interests of our clients, and confront the underlying causes of poverty, discrimination and inequality.
 - We are committed to being [accessible and welcoming](#) to all.
- Our work involves:
 - representing clients
 - providing legal information and advice, forms and other helpful tools
 - testifying before the legislature or administrative committees and boards about how laws or rules impact Vermonters everyday
 - advocating for new protections or the enforcement of those that already exist, and
 - identifying and working to correct systemic problems that adversely affect vulnerable people.



Who We Serve

- 59.5% of clients identify as cis or transgender women or girls, 40% as cis or transgender men or boys, and .5% identify as transgender (not man/boy or girl/woman), agender, or gender nonconforming
- 29% of clients report at least one child in the household
- 9% of clients who shared their race identify as BIPOC or a race other than white
- 6.7% of clients communicate in a primary language other than English

What We Do



Legal Problem	Case Count
Benefits	1471
Consumer	431
Education	579
Employment	183
Family	890
Health	691*
Housing	3,606
Individual Rights	1,810
Misc.	777
Blank	17
Grand Total	10,455

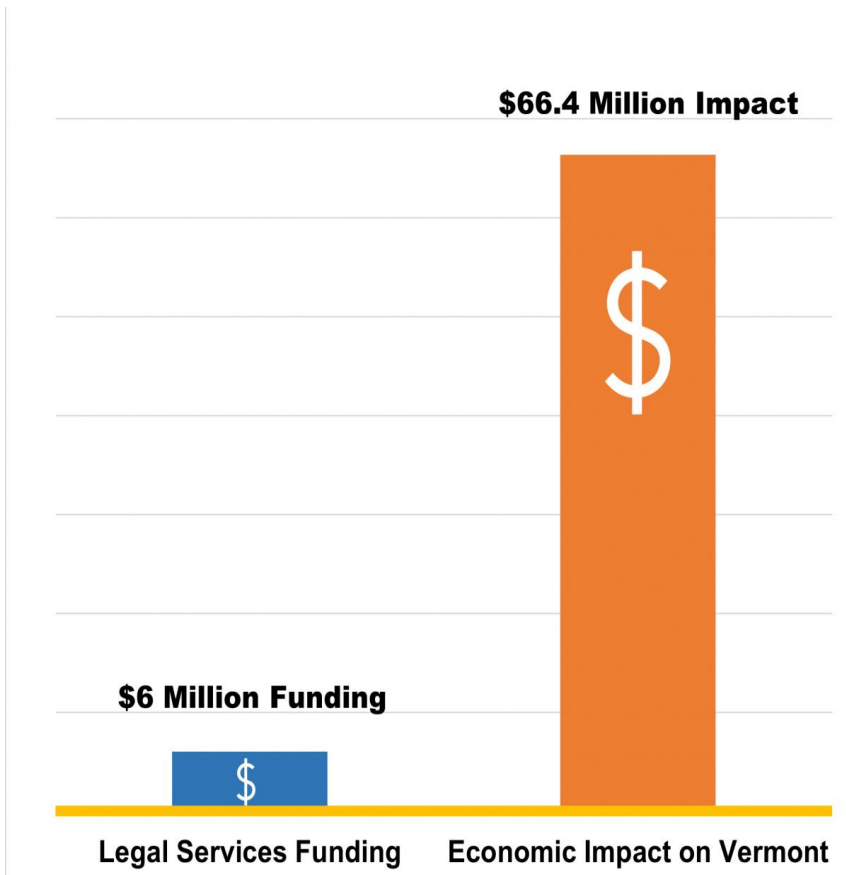
How We Solve Problems

	Benefits	Housing	Individual Rights	All Problem Areas
Counsel & Advice	275	639	290	2338
Brief Service	235	473	423	1613
Extensive Service	220	513	140	1555
Negotiated Settlement	46	517	438	1269
Agency Decision	263	39	1	358
Court Decision	4	133	175	502
Appeal	30	2	1	40

Advocacy to Create Housing Stability

- Woman with disabilities had rented the same home for 15 years.
- Had a voucher
- Landlord passed away, and she wanted to buy the home through a HUD program
- She got a notice of termination!

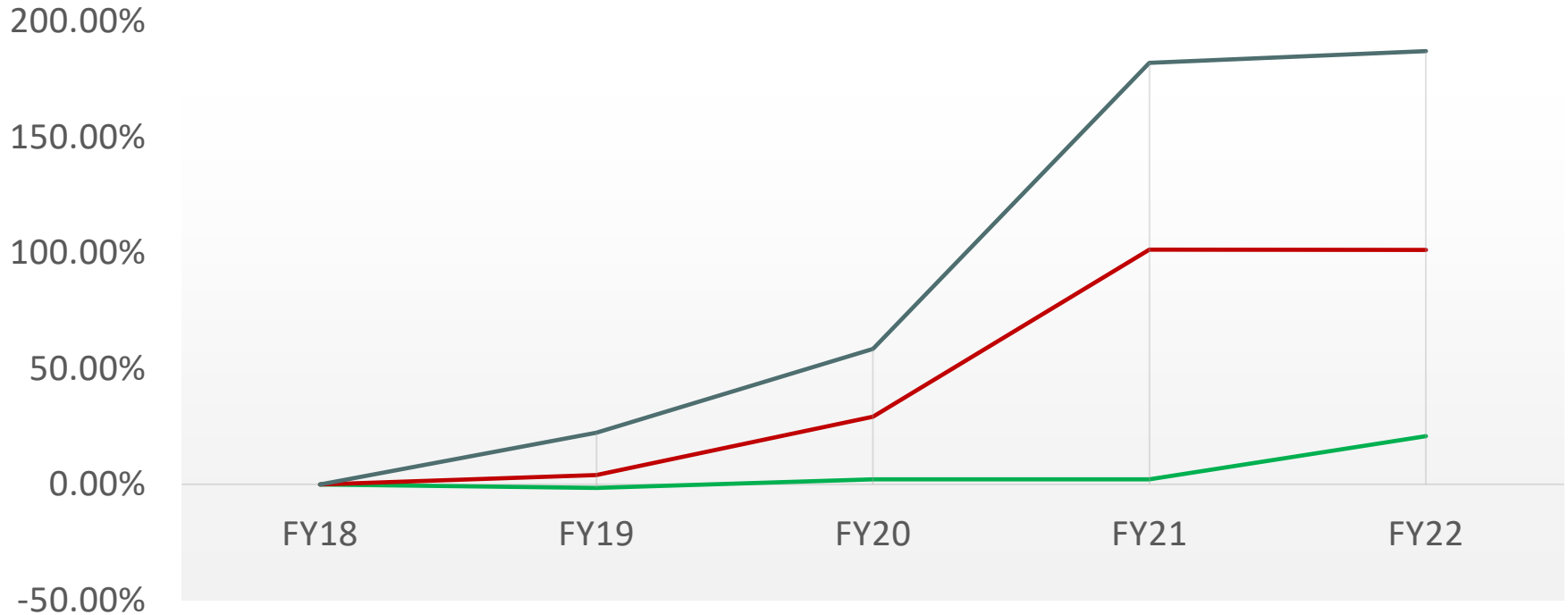
Benefits of Funding Legal Services



- Income for low-income households: \$32.7 million
- Cost savings: \$2.6 million
- Multiplier impact on communities: \$31.1 million

Requests for Service FY18-FY22

% Change in Need for Services and VLA Budget



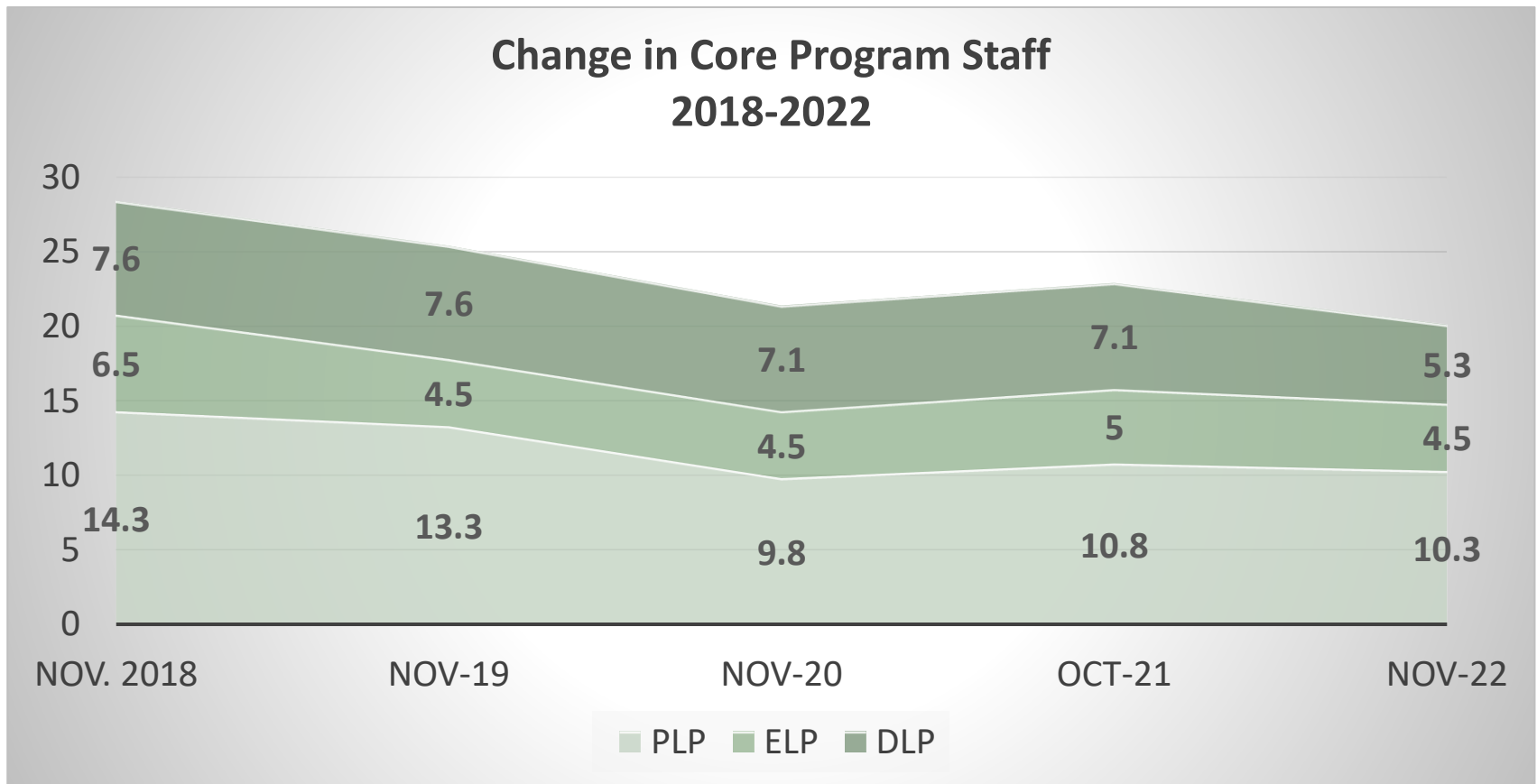
— % Change AHS Budget from FY18

— % Change Calls from FY18

— % Change Screening Minutes from FY18



Poverty, Elder, and Disability Law Project Staff



How AHS funding is used

- Poverty Law Project – 41.4%
- Mental Health Law Project – 32.8%
- Disability Law Project – 10.2%
 - Act 248 & Guardianships – 5%
 - Other – 5.2%
- Elder Law Project – 7.6%
- All other VLA Projects – 8%



State Fiscal Year	General Legal Services
SFY19	1,323,494
SFY20	1,373,494
SFY21	1,373,494
SFY22	1,623,494
SFY23	1,923,494
Four-Year Totals	5,693,976

Anticipating Increased Need in Consumer Law



- More people who are getting loan modifications to avoid foreclosure are ending up with a **larger** payment
- Waitlist system for Homeowner Assistance Program anticipated soon
- Mortgage interest rates have skyrocketed
- Vehicles are more expensive
- Inflation for food and energy remains high
- **Yet**, average wages increased at a much slower rate, 7.4%.

Appropriation Request

- **Maintain Capacity:**
 - \$500,000
- **Meet Increased Requests for Service:**
 - \$390,000
- **Protect Vermonters from Foreclosure and Consumer Debt:**
 - \$450,000

General Fund / Federal Match Estimates

Purpose	General Fund Estimate	Federal Match Estimate
Maintain Capacity	\$180,000	\$320,000
Meet Increased Demand for Service	\$140,400	\$249,600
Protect Vermonters from Consumer Debt and Foreclosure	\$162,000	\$288,000
Total	\$482,400	\$857,600

Long Term Care Ombudsman

- LTCO staff and volunteers advocate for Vermonters in LTC facilities and on the Choices for Care program.
- In SFY2022, 6,783 people received CFC services. Vermont currently has 6,514 licensed beds in skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes, and assisted living residences.
- LTC issues have increased exponentially due to Covid pandemic and extreme LTC staffing shortage.
- Currently, LTCO project has one director, five paid ombudsmen, and one volunteer ombudsman.

Long Term Care Ombudsman (2)

- Project has essentially been flat funded for seven years.
- State funding has been flat for over ten years.
- Funding increase needed to
 - 1) meet current costs,
 - 2) replace a volunteer and training coordinator who retired in 2022 and
 - 3) add an additional ombudsman position to assist with high numbers of cases in Chittenden and Rutland counties.

Long Term Care Ombudsman (3)

- H. 494: \$250,000 appropriation (\$142,500 General Funds, \$107,500 Federal Funds)
- Additional funds requested to maintain capacity and add two additional staff members: \$450,524 (combined state and federal; est. \$256,799 GF/\$193,725 FF)
- Alternative request to maintain capacity and add one additional staff member: \$296,591 (combined state GF with federal match; Est. \$169,056 GF/\$127,534 FF)