



Vermont  
Association of  
Area Agencies  
on Aging

145 Pine Haven Shores Road  
Ste 2217  
Shelburne, VT 05482  
(802) 578-7094  
[www.Vermont4A.org](http://www.Vermont4A.org)

**Member Agencies:**

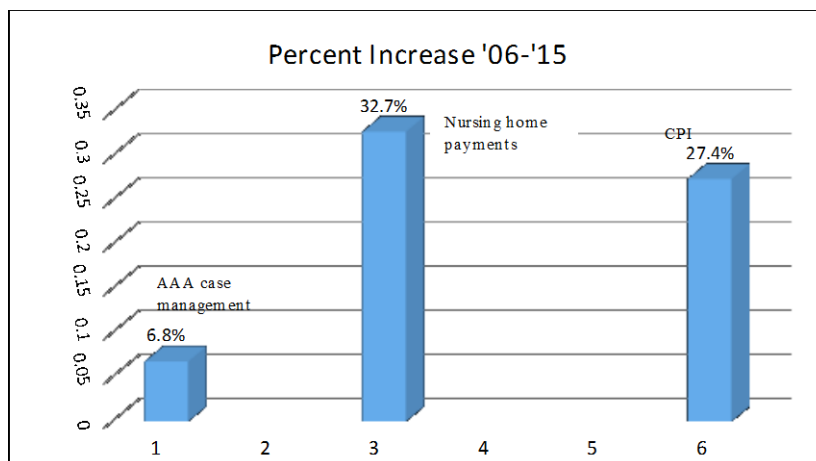
CVAA  
Central Vermont Council on Aging  
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging  
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging  
Senior Solutions

**February 11, 2016  
House Committee on Appropriations**

My name is Angela Smith-Dieng, and I am the Executive Director of the Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A). Thank you for the opportunity to speak with the committee today. For over forty years, Vermont's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) have been working to provide services and supports to vulnerable older adults with the vision that every Vermonter deserves to age with health, independence and dignity. V4A works to support the agencies by strengthening their collaboration, broadening awareness of their impact, and advocating for their essential programs and services.

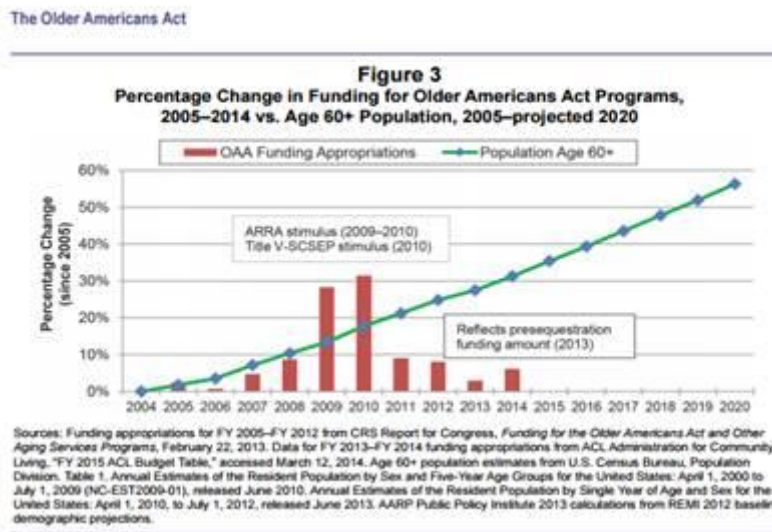
Regarding the budget, there are a few important points I'd like to share today:

- Vermont is the second oldest state in the nation, with the fastest growing population age 85 and older. Vermont's population over 65 has grown 37% in the last 15 years. It is expected that by 2030, 1 in 4 Vermonters will be over 65.
- The AAAs served approximately 60,000 seniors in 2014, 35% more than in 2005. Yet for many reasons, including inadequate financial support for home and community based service providers, the stability of our network is threatened.
- Approximately 53% of those Vermonters now nursing home eligible via the Choices for Care program have chosen to age at home with the support and services provided by AAAs and the network of community based providers. Nonetheless, nursing homes receive an annual statutory inflationary adjustment to their Medicaid rates as part of the budget, while home and community based service providers, whose costs also increase with inflation, do not. While nursing home per day payment Medicaid rates increased by 32% from 2006 to 2015 and the Consumer Price Index increased by 27%, case management Medicaid rates paid to AAAs increased by only 6.8% during that same timeframe. It is imperative, in order to secure the rebalancing of nursing home utilization and costs with home and community based living opportunities, that matching inflationary adjustments occur. The Human Services Committee is considering H.730 which addresses this key issue.





- Traditionally, AAAs have received the majority of their funding from the Older Americans Act. Yet, with the exception of the temporary ARRA funding, OAA funding has remained stagnant or decreased over the last ten years while the older population has exploded. Vermont receives the small state minimum in OAA dollars, not expected to increase, yet costs of service to our growing older population continue to mount, effectively acting as a cut to AAA capacity to meet growing community needs.



- Because our mission is to meet the needs of vulnerable elders, the AAAs work very hard to do more with less, to serve more seniors, many with more complex medical and social needs as they live longer, despite no increases in funding for the services they provide, and in some cases, decreases in funding, as happened in last year’s budget. Currently, we are seeing a significant increase in demand for home delivered meals – approximately 50,000 more meals were served in FY15 than were budgeted for. These nutrition services are critical to enabling vulnerable homebound elders to remain in the community, stabilize their health, reduce falls, and avoid preventable hospitalizations. As demand increases, we have had to negotiate with meal preparers and suppliers on per meal payments since our funds are limited. We have resisted waiting lists, but without increased funding, waiting lists may become necessary.
- We are also concerned about the serious delays that continue at the Department for Children and Families in determining financial eligibility for Choices for Care. This results in seniors who have been found clinically eligible unable to receive the services that will enable them to live in their homes and communities at costs far lower than institutional care. We have seen individuals deteriorate while waiting for determinations, thus requiring more acute care. These ongoing and lengthy delays are not only costly but poor customer service and unacceptable care.

We realize that it is a very difficult budget year, and we appreciate the challenge faced by this committee and others in making difficult choices around funding. We believe investing in the AAAs and the services we provide at the state level, such as home delivered meals and case management, will actually save state



Vermont  
Association of  
Area Agencies  
on Aging

145 Pine Haven Shores Road  
Ste 2217  
Shelburne, VT 05482  
(802) 578-7094  
[www.Vermont4A.org](http://www.Vermont4A.org)

**Member Agencies:**

CVAA  
Central Vermont Council on Aging  
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging  
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging  
Senior Solutions

dollars over time as more seniors are well cared for in their homes and spend less time in expensive hospitals and nursing homes. We have already seen this to be true as more Vermonters choose home based care over nursing homes, saving the state dollars. More can indeed be saved given small but critical investments in the home and community based infrastructure.

Thank you for considering the needs of the Area Agencies on Aging in your deliberations over the budget. We appreciate your diligence and hard work in making difficult decisions and investing state dollars wisely. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Angela Smith-Dieng  
Executive Director  
V4A