



*Building a Safe Harbor for Vermont Elders through Advocacy and Education*

January 21, 2015: Testimony on 2015 Budget Adjustment Act

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am Gini Milkey, Executive Director of the Community of Vermont Elders, a coalition of elder groups and individuals that focuses on the needs of Vermont elders, in particular low income Vermont elders, across our state.

I would like to just take a few moments to comment on two items included in the Governor's proposed Budget Adjustment:

First, we are concerned about the downward adjustment to the LIHEAP program. While we understand that fuel prices are down and therefore purchasing power of individuals may be the same for this winter even with this cut, the downward trend of LIHEAP benefits is concerning for those Vermonters who struggle to meet their heating needs year after year.

Second, we are troubled by the \$900,000 cut to the Choices for Care program. We would encourage the committee to explore in greater detail how there can be underutilization of funding for moderate needs, when at the same time there are increasing demands for those very services.

In 2005, when Vermonters gave up their entitlement to go into a nursing home, they did so with the expectation that Home and Community Based Services would be robustly supported. We think this cut in funds for the moderate needs group is a step backwards and we would encourage the committee to take a hard look at that issue as you make your Budget Adjustment Act spending decisions.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify on these concerns.