

Hello, my name is Sarah Launderville and I am the executive director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL). Thank you all for taking testimony today on the Administrations 2017 proposed state budget.

The Vermont Center for Independent Living is a statewide, nonprofit organization of people with disabilities working together for dignity, independence and civil rights.

Today, we would like to speak about three parts of the proposed budget which are funding for home modifications, restored funding to the Reach-Up program for individuals on SSI, and the proposal in the DVHA budget regarding involuntary medication.

VCIL has seen an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities working on housing related goals. This increase includes individuals with disabilities who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and do not have adequate funding for home access modifications. We are asking that you continue funding of home modifications through the VT Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independence Living (DAIL) budget for the Home Access Program allowing for modification of entrance and bathroom modifications for people with physical disabilities. On average, VCIL receives 10-12 new applications each year. Currently, there are 64 individuals on the HAP waiting list and depending on funding can wait up to 2 years before receiving a modification. We thank the legislature for past support of this important program.

VCIL was surprised and wants to express our serious concern that the Administration decided to try and save \$5million from the DVHA budget by proposing changes to the involuntary medication policy. Only this week was there a public hearing by the Vermont Department of Mental Health to hear the public's position on this change. VCIL is opposed to the proposed change. We do not believe that we can have serious input in a quick statement about the budget today and hope that this important policy be discussed by the legislature.

Finally, VCIL is asking that the legislature please reverse the policy decision that allows families on SSI to have their household income counted in their Reach Up grant.

We agree with the testimony presented by Ed Paquin from the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (VCDR).

In addition, the cost of living with a disability is higher than living without one. Additional costs may include having a driver, snow removal, personal attendant services, adaptive equipment and home modifications.

This decision has hurt the lowest income parents who have disabilities living in our state and with a cost savings of \$4 million in the budget this past year, we strongly ask that this decision be reversed.

Again, thank you so much for taking testimony today. If you have any further questions, please call or email.

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