

**Testimony of Sue Chase
Treasurer, Vermont Association of Adult Day Services (VAADS)
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Vermont's population continues to age. Our state has one of the highest percentages of people aged 65 or older and continues to grow at a rate of 3-4% annually. Ten percent of Vermont's seniors have Alzheimer's disease or related dementia and that figure is expected to increase by 55% over the next decade or so. Nationally, about 28% of non-institutionalized people 65+ report having difficulty performing at least one activity of daily living such as walking, toileting, etc. Some have described this trend as the "gray tsunami".

This Legislature, along with the Vermont Department of Aging, Disabilities & Independent Living, has worked hard preparing for this significant change in demographics. Almost ten years ago, Vermont took the lead in establishing the Choices for Care program. CFC's Moderate Needs Group program was created in an effort to provide preventive services that would help avoid or delay the need for more costly care. One of the goals of CFC was to reduce utilization of nursing homes. Vermont has achieved this goal. Enrollment in HCBS and ERCs exceeds nursing home enrollment. We have a wide range services including personal care, adult day, homemaking, respite, case management and more that have facilitated this growth.

In the past 10 years, the acuity and complexity of needs for adult day program participants has grown significantly, including those on the MNG program. Vermont's adult day programs have seen an increase in the number of people who have dementia, severe mental illness and other chronic health problems. The average length someone attends one of Vermont's adult day programs is between two and four years at a significant savings, especially since adult day services cost less than 45% of nursing home care.

VAADS supports DAIL's efforts to avoid a waiting list for the High Needs Group. While we were concerned when the Governor's August recession took \$2 million from DAIL, we are pleased that DAIL is asking for \$1.6 million back to help ensure no waiting list for the High Needs Group.

VAADS is very concerned about the plan to take \$900,000 from the MNG program. Adult day programs work within a very tight budget. We are half way through this fiscal year and the majority of adult day providers have drawn down 46% of their MNG allocation. Most of the providers are expecting to use their full

allocation by June 30th. If any portion of the \$900,000 MNG cut is intended to come from adult day programs, it could be disastrous for MNG participants and their families. Programs would have to either turn these existing participants away or would have to agree to provide the services at little or no cost – neither of which is a viable options for our programs.

A recent AARP article cited adult day services as a model of person and family centered care. Please support this vital, community-based resource which is helping some of Vermont's frailest citizens to live in the community setting of their choice at significant savings to the State.

Thank you.