

April 13, 2015

Senator Claire Ayer
Chair, Senate Health and Welfare
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Senator Ayer,

This letter is a follow up on my testimony yesterday, on behalf of the Community of Vermont Elders, regarding your Committee's recommendations to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The following issues represent COVE's budget priorities:

- 1) **Eligibility Determinations for Choices for Care:** The latest data related to eligibility determinations for Vermonters applying for Choices for Care show, statewide, approximately 60% of applicants wait more than 60 days for a determination of financial eligibility. This is a significant delay which puts at risk those individuals' health and ability to age in their homes. COVE would recommend the following language:

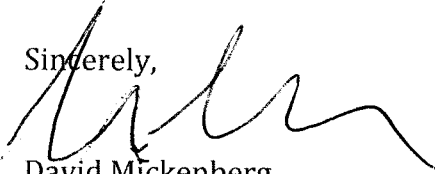
"The Commissioners of the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Disability, Aging and Independent Living, and the Department of Vermont Health Access shall evaluate the process for determining an individual's eligibility for Choices for Care and the reasons for consistent delays in such eligibility determinations. The Commissioners shall report their findings and recommendations as to how eliminate eligibility determination delays to the Senate Health and Welfare Committee and the House Human Services Committee no later than January 15, 2016."

- 2) **Funding of Long Term Care Taskforce:** Vermont has a Long Term Care Crisis that is receiving insufficient attention. The LTC taskforce, included initially in S. 139, would cost only \$2460 and would present a road map to evaluate Vermont's current LTC services and needs for the future.
- 3) **LIHEAP:** COVE supports restoring the \$6 million cut to LIHEAP benefits. This cut marks an approximately 11% reduction for beneficiaries and is around 17% of all the cuts to AHS, a disproportionate share and significant burden on elderly and low income Vermonters.
- 4) **Choices for Care:** COVE supports restoring cuts to case management in Enhanced Residential Care and reversing elimination of the Adult Day Grants. These programs are essential to helping Vermonters age at home and relieve pressures on hospitals and nursing homes. It should be noted that the case management for ERC helps approximately 500 Vermonters, yet it would take

only 10-12 of those Vermonters being forced to go to a nursing home to subsume the proposed savings. With that in mind, the committee may want to consider restoring these cuts by using some of the \$3 million increase that nursing homes are scheduled to receive this year. In addition, we support including language in the budget that would authorize CFC savings from FY 15 to be used to continue supporting individuals in the moderate needs group that have enrolled in the program over the last two years.

Please let use know if you have any questions or concerns about the above, or if you would like COVE to discuss each item in more detail with you and the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Mickenberg', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

David Mickenberg
On Behalf of COVE