



**Vermont  
Association of  
Area Agencies  
on Aging**

476 Main Street  
Suite #3  
Winooski, VT 05404  
(802) 578-7094  
[www.Vermont4A.org](http://www.Vermont4A.org)

**Member Agencies:**  
Age Well  
Central Vermont Council on Aging  
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging  
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging  
Senior Solutions

Thank you for taking my testimony. I am Beth Stern, Executive Director of Central Vermont Council on Aging, and the President of the Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Our five area agencies on aging located throughout Vermont respond to the needs and directions of older Vermonters and their families by offering information and assistance in many areas. We share available options for caregiver support, health insurance counseling, transportation, senior nutrition programs including meals on wheels, adult day programs, home health services, housing alternatives, exercise and wellness programs.

First some demographics that you should be aware of:

- There are over 100,000 Vermonters over the age of 65, or about 1 in 6.
- Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in the state.
- 23 Vermonters turn 65 each day, and many live well into 80s and 90s.
- The number of Vermonters age 65-74 will grow by 63% over the next 10 years.
- One in three households include someone over the age of 60
- For the cost of caring for one senior in a nursing home, three can be cared for at home with home and community based services.

For the FY 2018 budget, we have 2 focus areas:

**1. PARITY IN VERMONT'S HOME & COMMUNITY-BASED DELIVERY SYSTEM.**

Health care reform will not succeed if Vermont appropriates reimbursement increases for institutional providers while severely starving the community-based delivery system. Nursing facilities automatically receive annual inflationary increases (in FY 18, projected at over 2.6 million dollars) while home & community based services like the Area Agencies on Aging, Home Health and Adult Day cares do not. We would like the state to integrate parity in the budget and put its money where its priorities are – keeping people at home



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where they want to be and where the costs are lower, by including a cost of living increase for home and community based services.

- 2. HOME-DELIVERED MEALS For older Vermonters who are frail, who have a disability and are at nutritional risk should be a covered service in the Choices for Care Waiver.** A clinically sound care plan must address the needs for nutritional supports. Vermont covers the cost of meals for Medicaid residents in nursing facilities, but refuses to cover nutritional supports for Medicaid recipients who choose to receive long-term care in home & community-based settings. This policy disparity is indefensible and can be changed through an amendment to Vermont's Global Commitment waiver to allow home delivered meals to be a reimbursable covered service.

There are bills in process on both these issues. Neither of these recommendations is free but also, neither is a budget buster. If 300 (20%) of Choices for Care clients choose Home Delivered Meals (which is about the number at present), it will cost the state less than \$200,000 a year. This is less than the cost of 2 Choices for Care clients in a nursing home.

Here's the bottom line: We can't keep our heads in the sand in regards to our aging population. We can utilize creative and effective solutions now which are less expensive, and give people what they want and need. Conversely, we can guarantee that we will be faced with a more serious and more expensive crisis in the coming years. Please help Vermont continue to be a leader in tackling the challenges and opportunities of meeting elders' needs. Thank you.