



Empowering Seniors and Caregivers Senior Helpline 1-800-642-5119

*23 Vermonters
turn 65 each day!*

Testimony February 13, 2018 House Appropriations Committee

Hello. I want to express my thanks to the committee for holding these hearings to gain input into the FY 2019 budget.

I'm Beth Stern and I've been the executive director of Central Vermont Council on Aging since 2005.

I have two main requests for the committee. The first bill I'd like to discuss, H 434, adds Home Delivered Meals to the service list for the more than 50% of Choices for Care recipients who are at home. These individuals are by definition at nursing home level of care and qualify for long term care Medicaid. If these individuals were in a nursing home, they would get their meals paid for and prepared every day. However, because they are at home, they do not. We are all well aware of the link between nutrition and health, between nutrition and falling, between nutrition and general well-being. Supporting these individuals to be able to stay at home means supporting their nutritional status, and one way to do that is by offering them home delivered meals as part of a care plan. An additional benefit is that by shifting the cost of these meals to Medicaid, we free up Older American's act dollars to serve other older people who are not on Medicaid, and we are better able to support senior centers and meal sites which operate on a shoestring and struggle financially.

The second bill, H 284, establishes annual inflationary increases for Medicaid rates for home base providers. Over the past decade, these rates to Area Agencies on Aging, VNAs and Adult Day providers have increased only 7%, and adjusted for inflation, we are receiving less reimbursement than we were a decade ago. What does that mean? For my agency, we have cut 2 case management positions which translates into less service for vulnerable older adults who need us. Guaranteeing an annual Medicaid rate increase would go a long way in helping us plan for the growing number of older Vermonters who will need our assistance in the future years.

Again, thank you to the committee for this opportunity. When we, as a society, support older Vermonters to live as independently as possible, everybody benefits.

Beth Stern, 476-2676