

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
FROM: Sean Londergan, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
RE: Testimony on H. 924 (House Bill passed on Appropriations for FY 2019)
DATE: March 27, 2018

- Committee Members: thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.924.
- As the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, I support the actions taken by the House to increase the support older and disabled Vermonters. Specifically, the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (Office) supports the House’s actions to restore funding to some of the disability and health care programs, which the Governor proposed cutting. The Office supports the House’s proposal to:
 1. Fully fund the projected developmental disabilities services caseload need by adding \$4.33M to the budget (\$2M of which is from the General Fund).
 2. Provide a **2% increase** for home health across the services (including Choices for Care) and a **2% increase** for Area Agencies on Aging and Adult Day Centers through Choices for Care (and Personal Care daily rates).
 - i. HHA: Increase likelihood that CFC participants will receive all the services they need; staffing levels (biggest problem observed by LTC Ombudsman Office)
 - ii. Day Care Centers provide an array of services enabling adults with physical and cognitive impairments to remain in the community (along with respite, support and education to family members)
 - iii. AAA case management is vital to the CFC participants living in the community and for NH residents seeking to return to the community
 - iv. Flexible Choices is an important community based option for CFC participants
 3. Restore funding for attendant care (Attendant Services) for severely disabled individuals
 - i. (Attendant services provide personal care services that allow persons which disabilities to remain living in the community)
- As an advocate of public health, I support the actions taken by the House to better support vulnerable Vermonters and public health, such as with:
 1. **Mental Health**
 - a. The House’s proposed budget provides for approximately \$168,000 to for the state to offer a 24/7 “warm line” — a free emergency support line for Vermonters dealing with mental health issues — and money to develop supportive housing (lack of access to mental health services a big problem experienced by residents of long-term care facilities)

2. Economic Support and Child Care

- a. The House's proposed budget fully funds keeping the subsidy current with FPL income levels; and maintains new grant program for providers with high percentage of infants and toddlers and subsidy clients.
- **The Office does not support that House's proposal to:**
 1. Cut by \$827,000 cut Vermont's cost-sharing reduction program (which provides subsidies to help Vermonters with medical deductible and co-pay costs). The result of the cut will be to make health care more expensive for more Vermonters.