



**Vermont
Association of
Area Agencies
on Aging**

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Member Agencies:
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Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging
Senior Solutions

To: House Committee on Human Services
From: Janet Hunt, Executive Director
Date: January 22, 2020
Regarding: H.611 Older Vermonters Act

As a result of the 2018 Vermont Act 172 which established an Older Vermonters Act Working Group (OVAWG) charged with making recommendations for a future Older Vermonters Act, I was designated as a member to represent the Area Agencies on Aging in my role as Executive Director for the Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A).

I attended and contributed in all working group meetings, participated in the Health & Wellness/Long-Term Services & Supports Subgroup, and I also volunteered to be one of the three editors of the report before it was finalized. This editing group met on three separate occasions in various stages of the report in order to fulfill our work.

It was an honor and a privilege to work alongside other leaders in the state to complete the tasks of the Older Vermonters Act Working Group.

The other subgroups besides the Health & Wellness/Long-Term Services & Supports were the Employment & Community Engagement Subgroup and the Comprehensive System of Services and Supports Subgroup. Together, as an outcome of the work of the Subgroups, we were able to establish the “OVAWG Framework of Rights and Principles” which became the tool used by the OVAWG to guide all recommendations. I place this table below from the OVAWG Report to remind us of the OVAWG Framework.

OVAWG Framework
<u>Overarching Rights</u>
Self-Determination
Safety & Protection
Coordinated & Efficient System of Services
<u>Principles</u>
Financial Security
Optimal Health & Wellness
Social Connection & Engagement
Housing, Transportation & Community Design
Family Caregiver Support

Most significant to me as we built momentum in our work is that the OVWG always “Put the Person First”. The focus of the Act is clearly on the older Vermonter and family caregiver – what we all want Vermont to be like for all of us as we age. Based on how we view that from the person-first perspective, we then were able to identify the roles of the State, the Area Agencies on Aging and how other services and supports work in achieving that vision for all of us.

I describe my work and interests with the OVWG because I want to be clear about how invested I am personally and professionally in H.611. The Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging represents the five agencies whose mission it is to provide advocacy, leadership and a voice for the aging network in Vermont. V4A envisions a Vermont that values and supports us as we age. The Area Agencies on Aging are responsible to carry-out many of the requirements of the Older Americans Act therefore having an Older Vermonters Act would create consistency in our work.

The only recommendation that I have at this time about H.611 is that we change some of the language where the words “they” and “them” are used. Aging is a natural factor for all of us. We all must embrace aging – it isn’t about them – or those people. The more we become familiar and comfortable with the realization that we are all aging, the more we can all relate to and accomplish what needs to be addressed in H.611 Older Vermonters Act.