



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Kitty Toll, Chair, Committee on Appropriations
From: Rep. Ann Pugh, Chair, Committee on Human Services
Cc: Representative Mitzi Johnson, Speaker, House of Representatives
Date: January 14, 2020
Subject: FY20 Budget adjustment recommendations

The House Committee on Human Services (Committee) thanks the House Committee on Appropriations for the opportunity to comment on provisions of the FY20 Budget Adjustment Act. In general, the Committee did not have concerns regarding the specific monetary proposals outlined in the Governor's budget adjustment proposal. As noted below, the Committee does question some policy changes that are not reflected in the proposal.

Specialized Accommodation Grants

The Committee believes that the Specialized Accommodation Grants historically issued by the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division should be maintained. These grants ensure that children with complex medical or behavioral needs are able to remain in a child care setting. The Committee heard testimony that these grants have been critical in allowing children with special needs to access mainstream child care services. We believe that it is important not to lose ground this fiscal year as we closely evaluate the need and how it can be addressed going forward.

While the Committee is happy to hear that this year's appropriation for the modernization of the Child Care Financial Assistance Program has been successful, the Committee is concerned about the resulting loss of revenue for the Specialized Accommodation Grants. In order to continue funding grants at the same level as last year, the Committee requests that an additional \$153,000 be appropriated to the Department in the FY20 Budget Adjustment Act. This bridge funding will allow time to review these grants and develop a formal policy in this area.

Choices for Care

The Committee appreciates the opportunity to review the Choices for Care appropriation as a whole due to changes made during the 2019 appropriation process. The case mix calculation is a customary part of the rate-setting process for nursing facilities. The Committee agrees with the proposed increase of \$2,900,000.00.

Developmental Disabilities Services

The reduction of \$368,524 represents decreases in utilization in 4 service areas: targeted case management, the Bridges Program, specialized services for people living in nursing homes, and family-managed respite. This reduction is based on actual underutilization of these services, therefore the Committee does not oppose the proposed monetary reduction. The Committee plans to monitor the caseload and reasons for the underutilization in these areas during the FY 2021 budget process.

Attendant Services

The Committee understands the explanation for lower utilization of the Medicaid Attendant Services Program related to the increased use of the Choices for Care Program and some inability to fulfill allocated hours. Overall, it continues to be concerned about health care workforce issues because unfilled hours does not necessarily equate to lower need. The Committee will continue to review this issue during the FY 2021 budget process.

Additional AHS Deputy Secretaries

The Committee recommends that proposed changes to 3 V.S.A. §§ 3004 and 3023 be removed from the FY20 Budget Adjustment Act. The Committee does not support using the Budget Adjustment Act to reorganize the Agency of Human Services' structure through increasing the number of deputy secretaries. A broader and more focused discussion with multiple committees and stakeholders is required prior to a decision on this topic.