



**Vermont
Association of
Area Agencies
on Aging**

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Member Agencies:

Age Well
Central Vermont Council on Aging
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging
Senior Solutions

To: Senate Appropriations Committee
From: Janet Hunt, Executive Director of Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A)
Date: April 16, 2019
Re: FY2020 State Budget and older Vermonters

All Vermonters need the same things: food, shelter, community and the ability to receive care. When we have adequate systems of support for older Vermonters, we will improve the lives of all Vermonters.

Most Vermonters want to be able to stay in their homes as we get older. When Vermonters can age in a setting of our choice, we experience better health outcomes, stronger communities, and significant savings compared to costly nursing home care.

- We appreciate the 2% increase for Choices for Care providers in the House passed budget, and we ask the Senate to maintain this appropriation in your budget.
- The reimbursement rate to the meal sites and programs is significantly lower than the actual costs to prepare and deliver a meal to older Vermonters. Therefore, we appreciate that the House passed budget recognized the need to increase funding for meal programs by including an additional \$70,000 above the Governor's recommendation. We ask the Senate to increase the investment to \$650,000. These additional funds would help meal providers avoid wait lists, increase reimbursements, and offer more meals for older Vermonters at risk of malnutrition.

Vermont is a state with a thriving food economy and no Vermonter should be malnourished or go hungry. Vermont Nutrition Programs provide over 1,000,000 nutritious meals to more than 17,000 Vermonters each year. The average cost per meal is \$10. Without proper nutrition, an older Vermonter could face daily hospital costs averaging \$2,244. Together, we must invest more fully in our meal programs to ensure vulnerable older Vermonter can remain healthier at home, avoiding more costly healthcare facilities.

With adequate funding the program can ensure that older Vermonters can stay in their homes, get the food they need, and get a safety check from a friendly volunteer. Please help to make sure that older Vermonters have the food that they need.