



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

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TO: Senate Committee on Appropriations

RE: Comments on the Governor's Proposed and House Passed 2019 Budgets

FROM: Susan Aranoff, Esq., Senior Planner and Policy Analyst

DATE: April 16, 2019

Thank you for providing me this opportunity to comment on the Governor's proposed FY 2019 budget on behalf of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council (VTDDC).

The VTDDC is a statewide board created by the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights (the DD Act), first adopted by Congress in 1970. As stated in our 5-year plan, the VTDDC vigorously seeks changes in Vermont's many service systems so that Vermonters with Developmental Disabilities can access the supports and services necessary to foster community inclusion, self-determination, productivity, and independence.

Our constituents are healthcare users who have an important stake in the cost, quality, and availability of both traditional healthcare and disability long term services and supports. An estimated 86,000 Vermonters experience a developmental disability as defined by the DD Act, with approximately 5,100 receiving some type of community-based support through Medicaid.

VTDDC is charged under federal law with engaging in "advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities that... contribute to the coordinated, consumer-and-family-centered, consumer-and-family directed, comprehensive system that includes needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families."

Important Points about Developmental Services and wage increases for the DA/SSAs

- The House-passed Budget shortchanges people with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities.
- The House increased use of Global Commitment funds for several programs, including Choices for Care. However, it did not increase developmental disabilities services at all.
- Vermont's Designated and Specialized Services Agencies provide a full range of services including residential, community and employment supports, crisis beds, respite, and service coordination.
- Recent wage increases at the Designated Agencies disproportionately benefitted staff who provide mental health services at the expense of staff providing developmental services.
- Vermonters who need developmental disability services struggle to find qualified workers willing to work for \$14.00 an hour or less.
- There are 5 agencies that provide developmental disabilities services only. They tried to fund the pay increases on their own and have not been able to find the resources. They have the highest rates of staff turnover. The staff and clients of these agencies deserve equal treatment.
- The Developmental Services Budget is underfunded because \$541,947 was cut due to "underutilization". A 3-year average should be used to determine caseload dollar requests to smooth out the ups and downs in utilization.

The VT Developmental Disabilities Council supports Vermont Care Partners' Appropriations Priorities for Fiscal year 2020 as set out in Julie Tessler's April 16, 2019 Testimony.