

Testimony for the Governor's 2023 Budget
Joint House and Senate Appropriations Public Hearing

Good afternoon, my name is Maria King, from Saint Albans. I am the Long Term Care Administrator for Cathedral Square, a service oriented affordable housing organization that operates two licensed Assisted Living communities. Cathedral Square Assisted Living in downtown Burlington and Memory Care at Allen Brook in Williston, Vermont's first affordable Assisted Living specializing in memory care.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's 2023 budget today. I understand the Governor included a 3% increase to the reimbursement rate for long-term care services provided in home and community based settings, like Cathedral Square's Assisted Living residences. While that is a step in the right direction and appreciated, it is inadequate to respond to the staffing shortages we are facing. We respectfully request your committees to consider a 10% increase to the state's Medicaid reimbursement rate.

Cathedral Square, like all other LTC communities, has experienced unprecedented ongoing staffing shortages throughout the last 2 years. The shortages have impacted all positions - nursing, caregiving, cooks, housekeepers, custodial and administration. Our staff community has been creative, and we are all helping in roles we have not before. Administrator's supporting care, the CEO, nurses and admin are cooking and serving meals. Our duties do not stop at the end of the day like most other jobs. We cannot put a closed sign on our doors.

With more than 90% of our Assisted Living residents relying on Medicaid, we are left with razor thin margins. Our staff schedules with 20% vacancy have forced us to reduce our assisted living apartments by an equal percentage, at a time when our wait list for Assisted Living is 5-6 years. We need higher Medicaid reimbursement rates **now** to retain staff and recruit new staff. Beyond the 10% increase to Medicaid reimbursement we request that you please support the H.153 that passed the House last year. Without ongoing review of Medicaid rates, providers like Cathedral Square will have to continue to reduce capacity at a time when older Vermonters need our housing and services more than ever.

I would like to close by thanking the committees for your time and attention to this critical matter and for the opportunity to speak today.