

Dear Chair Lyons and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering ways to serve Vermonters through home- and community-based services within S.285. I was asked to follow up with suggested language for the bill. Before suggesting language, I want to again emphasize a couple of points from my testimony. There is strong research and evidence to show that providing support to family caregivers does prevent or delay the need for institutionalization, and such supports do not rely as heavily on our limited workforce. It makes sense to focus on these types of interventions.

A simple extension of the current Moderate Needs Group (MNG) program is not feasible or advisable. Even if there was additional funding, there simply are not the workers, both case management providers and direct service workers, to provide the services. In addition, there is not the evidence to support an expansion of the model as currently structured.

DAIL would propose the following language for S.285:

“The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living shall conduct an evaluation of the current Choices for Care Moderate Needs Group Program in consultation with Moderate Needs Group providers and participants. The following shall be evaluated: unmet needs of current participants and those on the waiting list, the ability of current services to address those unmet needs, current program funding structure and the adequacy of program provider allocations. The Department shall explore strategies for improving the program, which could include consideration of the use of evidence-based programs and interventions for family caregivers and shall propose methods for measuring performance and outcomes of any new services. The Department shall report back to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and House Committee on Human Services by January 15, 2024.”

The language above will allow for DAIL to be comprehensive and thoughtful in reviewing MNG and proposing any changes. We are happy to discuss this proposed language further with the committee if that would be helpful.

Thank you for your consideration,
Angela