

TO: Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

FROM: Jill Mazza Olson, Executive Director

DATE: February 22, 2022

RE: Follow-up on Testimony on S. 285

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 285. In my comments, I made three primary points:

- 1) The VNAs of Vermont is concerned about the proposed expansion of the Moderate Needs Program as outlined in the report commissioned by the Joint Task Force on Affordable, Accessible Health Care. The existing Choices for Care program is underfunded, and substantial workforce shortages are already hindering the ability of providers in the system to support all the individuals who qualify for services under the existing criteria.
- 2) We support DAIL's proposed language that calls for the department to evaluate the current moderate needs program and consider options to better support family caregivers. We propose a minor amendment to the language the submitted to you. In an email exchange, Angela Smith-Dieng expressed support for our proposal. The DAIL proposal and our suggested amendment is below.
- 3) Finally, in response to my testimony, committee members expressed interest in learning more about the current losses in the Choices for Care program faced by home health agencies. I have asked members in your districts to reach out to you individually to share that information on an agency-specific basis.

Proposed Amendment to DAIL Language

“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 evaluation process will be designed to minimize the administrative burden on participating providers. 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.”