



To: House and Senate Appropriations Committees
From: Charlie Gliserman (cgliserman@aarp.org | 802-689-6242)
Advocacy Director, AARP Vermont
Re: FY2025 State Budget
Date: February 15, 2024

Good afternoon. My name is Charlie Gliserman and I am the Advocacy Director at AARP Vermont. On behalf of AARP Vermont's 112,000 members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide comments as part of the FY2025 state budget process.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50+ to choose how they live as they age. In doing so, we support policies that enable older adults to age in their homes and communities, with the care they need. One of these policies is paid family and medical leave.

We request that the FY2025 budget include \$37 million in one-time funds to start-up a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program.

Right now, nearly 3 in 4 Vermont workers do not have paid family and medical leave benefits. This leaves workers one family or medical emergency away from losing their pay – and for some, even their job. Vermonters can't wait for paid leave.

Caring for a loved one can be expensive, isolating, and stressful – and it is a common Vermont experience. Across Vermont, 70,000 family caregivers provide critical assistance to their parents, spouses, and other loved ones, most while juggling full or part-time work.

Family caregivers save the state and taxpayers money by providing \$1.23 billion in unpaid care each year, preventing costly hospitalizations and caring for loved ones at home – where they want to be. These caregiving demands can lead to years of challenges, including lost jobs, debt, and reduced Social Security benefits or retirement savings.

Many of us are, have been, or will be a family caregiver. That is why research shows nearly 80% of voters age 40+ support creating a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program in Vermont. That includes a majority of voters in every political party, income level, and county in the state.

Investment in standing up this self-sustaining program will deliver an invaluable benefit to family caregivers, realize savings across the state budget, and reflect the will of Vermonters. It will make our communities stronger.

Please include \$37 million in one-time funds in the FY2025 budget to start-up a universal, state-run paid family and medical leave program. Thank you.