

TO: Senate Committee on Appropriations

From: Mary Hayden, Executive Director, Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A)

DATE: April 4, 2023

RE: Funding for Older Vermonters Nutrition Program (Meals on Wheels) -- \$3 million Request

The Area Agencies on Aging, in partnership with the Vermont Association of Senior Centers and Meal Providers, is requesting \$3 million in FY 2024 to meet the demands on the Older Vermonters Nutrition Program. While we appreciate the \$1 million the House added to the base budget, it is insufficient to meet the needs of the program.

The federal Older Americans Act funding for nutrition (home-delivered and congregate meals) passes from the federal Administration for Community Living through DAIL to the Area Agencies on Aging under a clear funding formula. AAAs contract with community meal providers, as well as commercial vendors, to prepare and deliver meals.

With the growing number of older Vermonters, funding is no longer meeting the need for home-delivered and congregate meals.

- Contracts with community meal providers provide a per-meal reimbursement rate.
- The average reimbursement rate is \$5.44/meal (range \$3.80-\$6.96). The average cost of meals in 2021 was \$11.75/meal.

We have a mounting funding gap.

# Meals Served (HDM & Congregate) 2021	State Average Cost/Meal 2021	Total Cost	Total Funding	Funding Gap
1,166,978	\$11.75	\$13,700,500	\$9,487,890	\$4,212,610

Vermont must increase its investment in Nutrition for Older Vermonters to create a sustainable and cost-effective plan for the future. We also suggest a study to look at sustainability.

Proposal

\$3,000,000.00 is appropriated to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living for the purpose of providing additional funding for congregate and home-delivered meals in the Older Vermonters Nutrition Program. On or before January 15, 2024, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, in consultation with the Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and the Vermont Association of Senior Centers and Meal Providers, and other meal providers, shall submit a report to the House Committee on Human Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare evaluating the Older Vermonters Nutrition Program and making recommendations for short- and long-term program sustainability.