



To: Chair Scheu and Members of the House Appropriations Committee
From: Greg Marchildon (GMarchildon@aarp.org | 802-224-6143)
State Director, AARP Vermont
Re: **S. 27 - An act relating to medical debt relief and excluding medical debt from credit reports**
Date: April 10, 2025

Dear Chair Scheu and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

AARP Vermont represents over 110,000 Vermonters aged 50 and older from every corner of the state and from all walks of life. As a non-profit, non-partisan organization, we advocate on behalf of our members for policies that make Vermont a better place to live and age.

S.27, a proposal to eliminate up to \$100 million in medical debt for low-income Vermonters and exclude medical debt from credit reports, would directly support this goal. The bill is an important step toward protecting the health and financial security of Vermont's aging population.

Right now, healthcare costs in Vermont are among the highest nationwide, impacting older Vermonters who are more likely to have health challenges and live on fixed incomes. To access the care they need, older Vermonters too often face an impossible choice: deplete their savings or take on medical debt. That debt can jeopardize their retirement or ability to afford housing, transportation, and food.

Medical debt can also keep older Vermonters from seeking care. In a 2021 study by the Vermont Department of Health, 85,000 Vermonters reported delaying or avoiding care due to fear of medical debt. When health care services are postponed, conditions can worsen, leading to more expensive care in the future and added pressure on our emergency rooms.

S.27 will ensure that older Vermonters who have avoided care due to lingering debt no longer have to make that choice. This will improve health outcomes for Vermont's seniors.

Under S.27, Vermont would partner with Undue Medical Debt, a national nonprofit that has partnered with donors and local governments to wipe out over \$14.8 billion in medical debt. Despite widespread access to health insurance and programs like Medicare, Undue Medical Debt estimates nearly a quarter of the debt it has eliminated was incurred by people who received medical care at age 50 or older.

Vermont has one of the oldest populations in the country, presenting challenges for our economy, workforce, and state budget. If older Vermonters are more financially secure, they are less likely to fall into poverty and rely on government services. S.27 is a critical step toward providing that stability, at no additional cost to taxpayers.



On behalf of AARP Vermont and our members, we strongly encourage you to support S.27, an investment in Vermonters that will deliver immediate financial relief, improve long-term health outcomes, and support a stronger future for Vermont.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Marchildon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Marchildon" clearly distinguishable.

Greg Marchildon

State Director, AARP Vermont