

House Appropriations Testimony
Budget Adjustment Public Hearing
January 14, 2026

RE: Vermont Center for Independent Living's
Meals on Wheels Program Funding Request

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sarah Launderville, and I'm the executive director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living and I'm here to ask for your support in fully funding VCIL's Meals on Wheels program and providing a budget adjustment of \$30,000.

Since 1995, VCIL has operated the only Meals on Wheels program in Vermont that serves people with disabilities under the age of sixty who, because of their disability, cannot prepare their own meals.

Our program exists to fill that gap and for our participants, each meal represents nourishment and additionally independence, safety, and the dignity of remaining in one's own homes and community.

We support people with both short and long-term needs. This may range from a short-term need for someone undergoing chemotherapy treatment for cancer, who might only need meals for a few months while they regain strength, to serving an individual with advanced functional limitations from a disability, who is no longer able prepare a meal. No matter what the duration, the need is real, and the meals we provide help prevent malnutrition and support recovery, stability, and independence.

The funding for VCIL's MOW program comes from the VT Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living and for years the funding provided does not cover the full expenses of the program. We've worked to fundraise and have used those unrestricted funds to cover that shortfall. This has become harder to keep up with the demand and the rising costs. It's important to note that this program is not eligible for funding through the Older Americans Act and any of the bills the VT Legislature has passed in recent years supporting other meal programs.

While we serve many Vermonters every day, we currently have a waiting list.

Your support will have a direct and immediate impact. By investing \$30,000, you can ensure that Vermonters with disabilities under sixty, whether facing temporary medical challenges or long-term functional limitations, are not waiting or hungry and will continue to live with dignity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Launderville
Executive Director
Vermont Center for Independent Living