

To: Representative Theresa Wood, Chair, Vermont House Committee on Human Services.

From: Jane Catton, CEO Age Well

Date: May 11, 2026

Subject: Overview of Older Americans Act (OAA) Funding Allocation and Oversight; TRIO Meal Contract.

As a follow up to Kim Lipinski's testimony last week on behalf of the Vermont Aging Network Consortium (VANC), I would like to provide further context regarding the recent committee discussions.

OAA Funding Allocation and Oversight

The Older Americans Act is a federal program administered through the U.S. Administration for Community Living and distributed through state units on aging to the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). OAA funding supports essential services that help older adults remain healthy, independent, and connected to their communities.

Programs funded through the OAA include congregate and home-delivered meals, transportation, caregiver support, case management, health promotion and wellness, legal assistance, senior center and meal site support, social engagement, elder abuse prevention, and ombudsman services.

For more than 52 years, since the establishment of Vermont's AAAs, these funds have been distributed according to federal intrastate funding formulas and state-approved allocation methodologies designed to target areas of greatest need. Each AAA receives resource projections and allocations based on these formulas. These allocations are reviewed and approved by each AAA Board of Directors, as required by the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), and are incorporated into each agency's annual operating budget.

Robust oversight mechanisms exist at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure funds are used appropriately and effectively. These mechanisms include

- annual independent financial and programmatic audits;
- quarterly financial reporting, monitoring, and reconciliation through DAIL;
- required documentation of expenditures;
- segregation of restricted funding streams; and
- standardized reporting through the Older Americans Act Performance System (OAAPS).

Additional oversight is provided through the State Plan on Aging, AAA Area Plans, and associated reporting requirements administered by DAIL. We also continually evaluate our services through consumer satisfaction surveys, waitlist monitoring, outcome measurement, Board of Directors oversight, local advisory councils, and public input.

OAA funding represents a highly accountable and cost-effective investment in the health, independence, and well-being of older adults. Existing oversight mechanisms ensure responsible stewardship of public funds while supporting essential services

TRIO Community Meals Contract

Four of Vermont's five AAAs currently maintain contracts of varying scope and size with TRIO Community Meals. As part of our collective effort to identify efficiencies and cost savings that support the long-term financial sustainability of our agencies, we worked collaboratively with TRIO to explore consolidating these arrangements into a single master contract rather than maintaining multiple separate contracts.

This administrative change affects only the administrative structure of the TRIO contract. It does not alter existing meal site contracts within AAA service areas, nor does it change the local delivery of congregate or home-delivered meal services. This is not a statewide meal contract and was never intended to replace the hybrid network of meal delivery systems with senior centers, meal sites, and local partnerships currently serving older Vermonters across the state.

This approach streamlines contract administration and management. Operationally, utilizing VANC as the contracting entity creates the most efficient structure. Each AAA will continue to work directly with TRIO for day-to-day meal operations and management, and TRIO will continue invoicing each AAA individually, consistent with current practice.

Over the past several months, we have worked collaboratively with TRIO to establish revised pricing based on combined meal volume, streamline delivery routes to reduce fuel and transportation costs, and optimize technology systems that support agency operations. We have also focused on maintaining high-quality meal standards, including cost-effective therapeutic meal options for clients.

As a result of these efforts, we anticipate reduced operational costs and increased savings within AAA budgets. These efficiencies will help offset the growing financial gap between existing OAA funding reimbursement structures and the actual cost of providing meals year over year.

We are grateful for the Legislature's continued support of programs that help older adults age with dignity, health, and independence. We appreciate your partnership and remain available to provide any additional information that may be helpful.