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Executive Director  
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On behalf of the Vermont Community Action Partnership (VCAP)

Dear Chair Lyons and Members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.534 as passed by the House.

My name is Joshua Davis, and I serve as the Executive Director of Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA). I am also here representing the Vermont Community Action Partnership (VCAP), the statewide network of Vermont's Community Action Agencies. I am pleased to share that VCAP supports the House-passed version of H.534 and respectfully encourages the Committee to advance the bill.

H.534 modernizes Vermont statute governing Community Action Agencies. The House version maintains the core intent of the original proposal while clarifying expectations and aligning statute with the way Community Action Agencies already operate under federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) requirements and Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) oversight.

The bill improves clarity, removes outdated language, and better reflects current professional standards in human services.

The bill updates terminology to reflect both current field standards and respectful language. For example, replacing older terminology with "individuals with low income" better reflects how we speak about and work with Vermonters we serve. This is a meaningful improvement and aligns Vermont statute with both federal guidance and contemporary practice.

The House language also clarifies planning requirements. Community Action Agencies conduct a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment every three years and incorporate those findings into an annual community action plan. This is already required through OEO and CSBG federal oversight.

The statute now more clearly mirrors existing accountability structures rather than creating a new or duplicative process. From an operational perspective, the House changes provide clarity without creating additional administrative burden.

The most substantive policy change concerns board term limits.

Rather than setting a fixed term limit in statute, the bill requires each Community Action Agency board to adopt its own term-limit policy through its bylaws.

VCAP supports this approach. Community Action Agencies are locally governed nonprofit organizations serving very different communities across Vermont. Local boards are best positioned to manage recruitment, succession planning, and continuity while still maintaining accountability. This preserves strong governance while allowing flexibility necessary in rural communities where board recruitment can be challenging.

In summary, the House-passed version of H.534:

- Modernizes outdated statutory language
- Uses respectful, people-first terminology
- Aligns state law with existing federal and OEO planning requirements
- Establishes clear but locally governed board accountability

VCAP supports H.534 as written.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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On behalf of the Vermont Community Action Partnership (VCAP)