



**House & Senate Appropriations Committee – FY 2027 Budget Request
Heather Robertson, Executive Director, The Gathering Place - April 3, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Heather Robertson. I am the Executive Director of The Gathering Place and the vice-president of the Vermont Association of Adult Day Services (VAADS). Adult day centers provide a safe, supportive environment where people can come during the day and receive a range of professional health, social and therapeutic services, as well as nutritious meals, and valuable social interaction. Adult day services also provide respite, support, and education to family members and caregivers.

In the House, we testified about 3 issues – Day Health and Rehab Services, Medicaid reimbursement, and the Dementia Respite Grant.

1. Day Health & Rehab Services (DHRS)

The DHRS program began in 2000, five years prior to the establishment of CFC. It has continued because it has different eligibility than Choices for Care, capturing people who otherwise would not receive these services. Without adequate access to the DHRS funding stream, individuals with lower income and assets, in need of the comprehensive services offered by Adult Day programs, would not be able to attend. This will jeopardize the continued health and well-being of many individuals and place them at risk of slipping into more expensive and limited health and service needs.

DAIL reports that the program has \$3.3 million available to draw down. Because Adult Day programs have been rebuilding after losses during the pandemic years, the usage of these funds has steadily increased as they rebuilt - In 2023, \$1 million was used, in 2024 \$1.5 million was used, and last year, \$1.8 million was used. Each year, we are increasing the amount that we need to draw down. We are very concerned that if we reduce DHRS by \$1 million, as proposed by the Governor, there is the possibility that funds will run out and we will have to turn people away from our programs.

2. Medicaid rate increase – 3.5%

VAADS had requested in the House a 3.5% inflationary increase in Medicaid reimbursement rate, which includes AAA case management services. The House only appropriated what amounts to approximately a 1% increase.

3. Expanding Dementia Respite and Dementia Capable Programing in Vermont

VAADS supports the request by the Alzheimer's Association and the Vermont Association of Adult Day Services for an increase in the Dementia Respite Grant program by \$500,000 and \$100,000 for respite services in underserved areas (both reflected in S.242).