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MEMORANDUM

To: Representative Kitty Toll, Committee on Appropriations
From: Representative Ann Pugh, Committee on Human Services
Cc: Representative Mitzi Johnson, Speaker, House of Representatives
Date: January 22, 2019
Subject: FY19 Budget Adjustment Recommendations

As requested, the House Committee on Human Services (“the Committee”) has reviewed provisions of the proposed FY19 budget adjustment act pertaining to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL), the Department for Children and Families (DCF), and the Act 11 (2018 Special Session) Children in Need of Services Reform Working Group Report (CHINS Report). The Committee thanks the House Committee on Appropriations for the opportunity to comment on these provisions.

DAIL:

The Committee has no objections regarding budget neutral adjustments transferring between DAIL programs or between the Agency of Human Services (AHS) and DAIL. We are supportive of the negotiated increases in direct care professionals’ salaries. However, the Committee believes that a starting salary of \$11.30 per hour is not adequate for such important work.

The major change with regards to the DAIL budget appears to be a reduction of \$706,719 in the Developmental Services appropriation to meet DAIL’s portion of the AHS grant reduction target. The administration claimed this reduction would not reduce services for any recipients. Previous reports provided by DAIL indicate that those one-time funds were used for a variety of services and supports including direct services to clients, improvements to employment services, specialized placements, grants to benefit young adults (primarily with Autism Spectrum Disorders) to participate in post-secondary education, and community support programs that help people learn skills and access their communities. This is in addition to the portion of one-time dollars that are allocated to designated and specialized service agencies used for emergency client needs, assistive technology, training, etc.

As described by DAIL, the funds are created only in the first year of a client’s services; therefore, they are one-time in nature. We can support accepting this reduction

as a one-time FY19 reduction, but not as a reduction in the base developmental services appropriation. It is also the Committee's understanding that the AHS-wide grants reduction in the FY19 budget was intended to be directed at the reduction or elimination of under-performing programs or services. We do not believe this applies to this appropriation.

DCF – CCFAP:

The Committee is disappointed that the \$2.5 million allocated to Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) was not utilized for those it was intended to serve. The Committee believes the \$2.5 million should be spent where it was originally appropriated, as it is not good policy to distribute the funding elsewhere. As Vermonters experience a statewide child care crisis in terms of decreasing access to affordable, high-quality child care, we deem it essential that this funding remain within the CCFAP budget and be used as one-time dollars as part of an ongoing look at child care funding priorities for coming year's budget. For example, the Committee supports one-time grants for workforce development, educational supports, and site improvements for child care providers to help Vermonters access high quality child care.

Given the two-year budget underutilization, the Committee looks forward to the administration's proposal in the FY20 budget addressing updates to the presently implemented 2008 child care subsidy rates.

CHINS Report:

In general, the Committee supports the CHINS report and the opportunity to use these one-time dollars to explore new initiatives and programs. The Committee believes that the initiatives outlined in the CHINS report are best implemented alongside one another in the same regions so that their effects may be evaluated together.

The Committee supports DCF's proposal to fund a comparison study of home-visiting models, so long as it describes what is being measured and how beneficiaries will be better off. The Committee requests that the results of any study be reported back to the Committee and the Vermont General Assembly before implementation.

The Committee wishes to monitor the administration of DCF's peer navigator program. The Committee expresses some concern that the program is being implemented statewide instead of as a pilot program.

The Committee believes that DCF's proposed \$50,000 budget for a listening tour seems expensive.