



Vermont Chapter

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To: Chair Lori Houghton and Members of the House Health Care Committee
From: Rebecca Bell, M.D., MPH, FAAP
Vermont Medical Society & American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter
Date: March 15, 2023
RE: H.283 – Suicide Prevention and Suicide Fatality Review

Thank you for asking me to testify. I am Becca Bell, a pediatric intensivist at the University of Vermont Children's Hospital, here to speak on behalf of the Vermont Medical Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter.

I want to begin by thanking you for your strong work this session on implementing harm reduction measures to prevent suicide in Vermont. These measures will make a difference in Vermont and that includes the elements outlined in H.283. You asked us to specifically discuss the creation of a Suicide Fatality Review Team, but we want to say that we also support all the other elements of the bill.

Regarding the creation of the Suicide Fatality Review Team we would want to make sure the efforts are coordinated with the existing work of the Child Fatality Review Team if the individual is a minor. VMS and AAP would support that the Child Fatality Review Team continue to be the lead entity for all deaths involving a minor (as mandated in [statute](#)) and that they report any findings in cases of death by suicide to the Suicide Fatality Review Team. The sharing of data/information would most likely need to be added in statutory language since the Child Fatality Review Board is under the Vermont Department of Health and the new team would be under the Department of Mental Health.

On the composition of the Suicide Review Team - VMS is happy to appoint members, but we would ask that you also include a primary care physician in addition to the psychiatrist. You heard in previous testimony that primary care is often the first line of contact to patients and are beginning to implement suicide safety planning in offices and will be able to offer valuable insight.