

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Judiciary to which was referred House Bill No. 89
3 entitled “An act relating to civil and criminal procedures concerning legally
4 protected health care activity” respectfully reports that it has considered the
5 same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the
6 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 * * * Definitions * * *

8 Sec. 1. 1 V.S.A. § 150 is added to read:

9 § 150. LEGALLY PROTECTED HEALTH CARE ACTIVITY

10 (a) “Gender-affirming health care services” means all supplies, care, and
11 services of a medical, behavioral health, mental health, surgical, psychiatric,
12 therapeutic, diagnostic, preventative, rehabilitative, or supportive nature
13 relating to the treatment of gender dysphoria, including insurance coverage for
14 any of the foregoing. Gender-affirming health care services does not include
15 conversion therapy as defined by 18 V.S.A. § 8351.

16 (b)(1) “Legally protected health care activity” means:

17 (A) the exercise and enjoyment, or attempted exercise and
18 enjoyment, by any person of rights to reproductive health care services or
19 gender-affirming health care services secured by this State or the provision of
20 insurance coverage for such services; or

1 (B) any act or omission undertaken to aid or encourage, or attempt to
2 aid or encourage, any person in the exercise and enjoyment, or attempted
3 exercise and enjoyment, of rights to reproductive health care services or
4 gender-affirming health care services secured by this State or to provide
5 insurance coverage for such services.

6 (2) Except as provided in subdivision (3) of this subsection (b), the
7 protections applicable to ‘legally protected health care activity’ shall not apply
8 to a lawsuit, judgment, or civil, criminal or administrative action that is based
9 on conduct for which an action would exist under the laws of this State if the
10 course of conduct that forms the basis for liability had occurred entirely in this
11 State.

12 (3) Notwithstanding subdivision (2) of this subsection (b), the provision
13 of a health care service by a person duly licensed under the laws of this State
14 and physically present in this State and the provision of insurance coverage for
15 such services shall be legally protected if the service is permitted under the
16 laws of this State, regardless of the patient’s location or whether the provider is
17 licensed in the state where the patient is located at the time the service is
18 rendered.

19 (3) “Reproductive health care services” means all supplies, care, and
20 services of a medical, behavioral health, mental health, surgical, psychiatric,
21 therapeutic, diagnostic, preventative, rehabilitative, or supportive nature

1 relating to pregnancy, contraception, sterilization, assisted reproduction,
2 pregnancy loss management, or the termination of a pregnancy, including
3 insurance coverage for any of the foregoing.

4 * * * Legally Protected Health Care Exemption from SLAPP Suits * * *

5 Sec. 2. 12 V.S.A. § 1041 is amended to read:

6 § 1041. EXERCISE OF RIGHTS TO FREE SPEECH AND TO PETITION
7 GOVERNMENT FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES; SPECIAL
8 MOTION TO STRIKE

9 * * *

10 (h) This section shall not apply to:

11 (1) any enforcement action or criminal proceeding brought by the State
12 of Vermont or any political subdivision thereof; or

13 (2) a case involving tortious interference with legally protected health
14 care as provided in section 7302 of this title.

15 * * *

16 * * * Abusive Litigation Concerning Legally Protected Health
17 Care Activity * * *

18 Sec. 3. 12 V.S.A. chapter 221 is added to read:

19 CHAPTER 221. LEGALLY PROTECTED HEALTH CARE ACTIVITY

20 § 7301. DEFINITION

21 As used in this chapter:

1 (1)(A) “Abusive litigation” means litigation or other legal action to
2 deter, prevent, sanction, or punish any person engaging in legally protected
3 health care activity by:

4 (i) filing or prosecuting any action in any other state where
5 liability, in whole or part, directly or indirectly, is based on legally protected
6 health care activity that occurred in this State, including any action in which
7 liability is based on any theory of vicarious, joint, or several liability derived
8 therefrom; or

9 (ii) attempting to enforce any order or judgment issued in
10 connection with any such action by any party to the action, or any person
11 acting on behalf of a party to the action

12 (B) A lawsuit shall be considered to be based on conduct that
13 occurred in this State if any part of any act or omission involved in the course
14 of conduct that forms the basis for liability in the lawsuit occurs or is initiated
15 in this State, whether or not such act or omission is alleged or included in any
16 pleading or other filing in the lawsuit.

17 (2) “Gender-affirming health care services” has the same meaning as
18 provided in 1 V.S.A. § 150.

19 (3) “Legally protected health care activity” has the same meaning as in 1
20 V.S.A. § 150.

21 (4) “Public agency” has the same meaning as in 1 V.S.A. § 317(a).

1 (5) “Reproductive health care services” has the same meaning as
2 provided in 1 V.S.A. § 150.

3 § 7302. TORTIOUS INTERFERENCE WITH LEGALLY PROTECTED
4 HEALTH CARE ACTIVITY

5 (a) Access to reproductive health care services and gender-affirming health
6 care services is a legal right in this State. Interference with legally protected
7 health care activity, whether or not under the color of law, is against the public
8 policy of this State.

9 (b) Any public act or record of a foreign jurisdiction that prohibits,
10 criminalizes, sanctions, or authorizes a person to bring a civil action against or
11 otherwise interferes with a person, provider, payer, or other entity in this State
12 that seeks, receives, causes, aids in access to, aids or abets, or provides, or
13 attempts or intends to seek, receive, cause, aid in access to, aid or abet, or
14 provide, legally protected health care services shall be an interference with the
15 exercise and enjoyment of the rights secured by this State and shall be a
16 violation of the public policy of this State.

17 (c) If a person, whether or not acting under color of law, engages or
18 attempts to engage in abusive litigation that infringes on or interferes with, or
19 attempts to infringe on or interfere with, legally protected health care activity,
20 any aggrieved person, provider, payer, or other entity, including any defendant

1 in such abusive litigation, may initiate a civil action for injunctive, monetary,
2 or other appropriate relief within six years after the cause of action accrues.

3 (d) If the court finds for the petitioner in an action authorized by this
4 section, recovery may include damages for the amount of any judgment issued
5 in connection with any abusive litigation, and any and all other expenses, costs,
6 or reasonable attorney’s fees incurred in connection with the abusive litigation
7 and with the tortious interference action.

8 (e) A court may exercise jurisdiction over a person in an action authorized
9 by this section if:

10 (1) personal jurisdiction is found;

11 (2) the person has commenced any action in any court in this State and,
12 during the pendency of that action or any appeal therefrom, a summons and
13 complaint is served on the person or the attorney appearing on the person’s
14 behalf in that action or as otherwise permitted by law; or

15 (3) the exercise of jurisdiction is permitted under the Constitution of the
16 United States.

17 (f) Abusive litigation does not include a lawsuit or judgment entered in
18 another state that is based on conduct for which a cause of action would exist
19 under the laws of this State if the course of conduct that forms the basis for
20 liability had occurred entirely in this State, including any contract, tort,
21 common law, or statutory claims.

1 (g) An attorney shall not liable under this section, if acting on behalf of
2 another and within the scope of the attorney’s license. A lawyer acting pro se,
3 or a public prosecutor having the personal discretion to decide whether to bring
4 abusive litigation, shall not be immune under this subsection.

5 § 7303. FOREIGN JUDGMENTS

6 (a) In any action filed to enforce a foreign judgment issued in connection
7 with abusive litigation concerning legally protected health care activity, the
8 court shall not give any force or effect to any judgment issued without
9 jurisdiction or due process or to any judgment that is penal in nature.

10 (b) Foreign judgments issued in connection with abusive litigation
11 concerning legally protected health care activity shall be brought by filing a
12 new and independent action on the judgment within five years after the
13 rendition of the judgment, and not after.

14 § 7304. TESTIMONY AND DOCUMENTS

15 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision in this title or court rule to the
16 contrary, except as required by federal law, a court shall not order a person
17 who is domiciled or found within this State to give testimony or a statement or
18 produce documents or other things with any proceeding in a tribunal outside
19 this State concerning abusive litigation involving legally protected health care
20 activity.

1 (b) Any aggrieved person, provider, payer, or other entity, including any
2 defendant in abusive litigation, may move to modify or quash any subpoena
3 issued in connection with such abusive litigation on any grounds provided by
4 court rule, statute, or on the grounds that the subpoena is inconsistent with the
5 public policy of this State.

6 § 7305. CHOICE OF LAW

7 Notwithstanding any general or special law or common law conflict of law
8 rule to the contrary, the laws of this State shall govern in any case or
9 controversy heard in this State related to legally protected health care activity,
10 except as may be required by federal law.

11 § 7306. NONCOOPERATION

12 (a) No public agency or employee, appointee, officer or official, or any
13 other person acting on behalf of a public agency may knowingly provide any
14 information or expend or use time, money, facilities, property, equipment,
15 personnel, or other resources in furtherance of any interstate investigation or
16 proceeding seeking to impose civil or criminal liability upon a person or entity
17 for:

18 (1) the provision, seeking or receipt of, or inquiring about legally
19 protected health care activity that is legal in this State; or

1 (2) assisting any person or entity providing, seeking, receiving, or
2 responding to an inquiry about legally protected health care activity that is
3 legal in this State.

4 (b) This section shall not apply to:

5 (1) any investigation or proceeding where the conduct subject to
6 potential liability under the investigation or proceeding would be subject to
7 liability under the laws of this State if committed in this State; or

8 (2) any action taken by the judicial branch in judicial proceedings;

9 (3) a public agency or employee, appointee, officer or official who, in
10 the course of normal business, is responding to a warrant or extradition
11 demand on the good faith belief that the warrant or demand is valid in this
12 State.

13 * * * Freedom of Access to Clinics * * *

14 Sec. 4. 13 V.S.A. § 1033 is added to read:

15 § 1033. INTERFERENCE WITH ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FACILITY

16 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

17 (1) all persons must be able to access health care facilities for the
18 purpose of obtaining or providing legally protected health care activity;

19 (2) the exercise of a person’s right to protest or counsel against certain
20 medical procedures must be balanced against another person’s right to obtain
21 or provide legally protected health care activity in an unobstructed manner;

1 (3) preventing the willful obstruction of a person’s access to legally
2 protected health care activity at a health care facility is a matter of public
3 concern; and

4 (4) it is necessary and appropriate to prohibit individuals from
5 knowingly obstructing another person’s entry to or exit from a health care
6 facility that provides legally protected health care activity.

7 (b) As used in this section:

8 (1) “Health care facility” means a hospital, ambulatory surgical center,
9 health center, clinic, health care provider’s office, or other facility that
10 provides reproductive health care services or gender-affirming health care
11 services, and includes the building or structure in which the facility is located.

12 (2) “Health care provider” has the same meaning as provided in 18
13 V.S.A. § 9402.

14 (3) “Legally protected health care activity” has the same meaning as
15 provided in 1 V.S.A. § 150.

16 (4) “Physical obstruction” means rendering impassable ingress to or
17 egress from a facility that provides legally protected health care activity or
18 rendering passage to or from such a facility unreasonably difficult or
19 hazardous.

20 (c) No person shall:

1 (1) by force or threat of force or by physical obstruction knowingly
2 injure, intimidate, or interfere with, or attempt to injure, intimidate, or interfere
3 with, another person because such other person was or is obtaining or
4 providing legally protected health care activity; or

5 (2) knowingly damage the property of a health care facility, or attempt
6 to do so, because such facility provides legally protected health care activity.

7 (d) A person who violates this section shall be assessed a civil penalty of
8 not more than \$300.00.

9 (e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit any
10 constitutionally protected activity.

11 Sec. 5. 4 V.S.A. § 1102 is amended to read:

12 § 1102. JUDICIAL BUREAU; JURISDICTION

13 (a) The Judicial Bureau is created within the Judicial Branch under the
14 supervision of the Supreme Court.

15 (b) The Judicial Bureau shall have jurisdiction of the following matters:

16 * * *

17 (31) Violations of 13 V.S.A. § 1033 relating to interference with access
18 to health care facility.

19 * * * Prohibition Against Extradition of Person Charged with Engaging
20 in Legally Protected Health Care Activity * * *

21 Sec. 6. 13 V.S.A. § 4970 is added to read:

1 § 4970. LEGALLY PROTECTED HEALTH CARE ACTIVITY

2 EXCEPTION

3 Notwithstanding any other provision in this chapter to the contrary, except
4 as required by federal law, the Governor shall not surrender a person charged
5 in another state as a result of engaging in legally protected health care activity
6 as defined in 1 V.S.A. § 150 unless the executive authority of the demanding
7 state alleges in writing that the accused was physically present in the
8 demanding state at the time of the commission of the alleged offense and that
9 thereafter the accused fled from the demanding state.

10 * * * Prohibition of Issuance of a Summons Concerning a Person Charged
11 with Engaging in Legally Protected Health Care Activity * * *

12 Sec. 7. 13 V.S.A. § 6650 is added to read:

13 § 6650. LEGALLY PROTECTED HEALTH CARE ACTIVITY

14 EXCEPTION

15 (a) Access to reproductive health care services and gender-affirming health
16 care services is a legal right in this State. Interference with legally protected
17 health care activity, whether or not under the color of law, is against the public
18 policy of this State.

19 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision in this chapter to the contrary,
20 except as required by federal law, a court shall not issue a summons where a
21 prosecution is pending in another state concerning legally protected health care

1 activity as defined in 1 V.S.A. § 150 or where a grand jury investigation
2 concerning legally protected health care activity has commenced or is about to
3 commence for a criminal violation of a law of such other state unless the acts
4 forming the basis of the prosecution or investigation would also constitute an
5 offense if occurring entirely in this State.

6 * * * Address Confidentiality for Persons Engaging in

7 Legally Protected Health Care Activity * * *

8 Sec. 8. 15 V.S.A. chapter 21, subchapter 3 is amended to read:

9 Subchapter 3. Address Confidentiality for Victims of Domestic Violence,

10 Sexual Assault, or Stalking

11 § 1150. FINDINGS AND INTENT

12 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

13 (1) persons attempting to escape from actual or threatened domestic
14 violence, sexual assault, ~~and~~ stalking, and human trafficking frequently
15 establish new addresses in order to prevent their assailants or probable
16 assailants from finding them; and

17 (2) persons who provide reproductive health care services or gender-
18 affirming health care services, persons who assist others in obtaining
19 reproductive health care services or gender-affirming health care services, and
20 persons who exercise their legal right to obtain reproductive health care
21 services or gender-affirming health care services in this State may be harassed,

1 intimidated, or threatened because of their legally protected health care
2 activity.

3 (b) It is the purpose of this subchapter to:

4 (1) enable ~~state~~ State and local agencies to respond to requests for public
5 records without disclosing the location of ~~a victim of domestic violence, sexual~~
6 ~~assault, or stalking~~ persons identified in subsection (a) of this section;

7 (2) promote interagency cooperation with the Secretary of State in
8 providing address confidentiality for ~~victims of domestic violence, sexual~~
9 ~~assault, and stalking~~ persons identified in subsection (a) of this section; and

10 (3) enable State and local agencies and ~~local agencies~~ school districts to
11 accept a Program participant’s use of an address, and local agencies to accept
12 an address, designated by the Secretary of State as a substitute mailing address.

13 § 1151. DEFINITIONS

14 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section
15 apply throughout the subchapter.

16 (1) “Actual address” means the physical location where the applicant
17 resides and may include a school address or work address of an individual, as
18 specified on the individual’s application to be a Program participant under this
19 chapter.

20 (2) “Agency” means any subdivision of the State of Vermont, a
21 municipality, or a subdivision of a municipality.

1 (3) “Domestic violence” means an act of abuse as defined in subdivision
2 1101(1) of this title and includes a threat of such acts committed against an
3 individual in a domestic situation, regardless of whether these acts or threats
4 have been reported to law enforcement officers.

5 (4) “Gender-affirming health care services” has the same meaning as
6 provided in 1 V.S.A. § 150.

7 (5) “Human trafficking” means conduct prohibited by 13 V.S.A. § 2652
8 or 2653, and includes a threat of such, regardless of whether the conduct or
9 threat of conduct has been reported to law enforcement officers.

10 ~~(5)~~(6) “Law enforcement agency” means the Department of Public
11 Safety, a municipal police department, a sheriff’s department, the Attorney
12 General’s Office, a State’s Attorney’s Office, or certified law enforcement
13 officers of the Department of Motor Vehicles, Agency of Natural Resources, or
14 Department of Liquor and Lottery. “Law enforcement agency” ~~shall~~ also
15 ~~mean~~ means the Department for Children and Families when engaged in:

16 (A) the investigation of child abuse and neglect;

17 (B) the delivery of services to families and children with whom the
18 Department is working pursuant to the provisions of 33 V.S.A. chapters 51, 52,
19 and 53; or

20 (C) the performance of the Department’s responsibilities pursuant to
21 an interstate compact to which the State is a party.

1 ~~(6)~~(7) “Law enforcement purpose” means all matters relating to:

2 (A) the prevention, investigation, prosecution, or adjudication of
3 criminal offenses, civil matters, or juvenile matters;

4 (B) the investigation, prosecution, adjudication, detention,
5 supervision, or correction of persons suspected, charged, or convicted of
6 criminal offenses or juvenile delinquencies;

7 (C) the protection of the general health, welfare, and safety of the
8 public or the State of Vermont;

9 (D) the execution and enforcement of court orders;

10 (E) service of criminal or civil process or court orders;

11 (F) screening for criminal justice employment;

12 (G) other actions taken in performance of official duties, as set forth
13 by statutes, rules, policies, judicial case law, and the U.S. and Vermont
14 Constitutions; and

15 (H) criminal identification activities, including the collection,
16 storage, and dissemination of criminal history records, as defined in 20 V.S.A.
17 § 2056a(a)(1), sex offender registry information, and DNA material and
18 information.

19 ~~(7)~~(8) “Program participant” means a person certified as a Program
20 participant under this chapter.

1 ~~(8)~~(9) “Public record” means a public record as defined in 1 V.S.A.
2 § 317.

3 (10) “Reproductive health care services” has the same meaning as
4 provided in 1 V.S.A. § 150.

5 ~~(9)~~(11) “Secretary” means the Vermont Secretary of State.

6 ~~(40)~~(12) “Sexual assault” means an act of assault as defined in 13
7 V.S.A. § 3252(a) or (b) (sexual assault) or 3253(a) (aggravated sexual assault),
8 and includes a threat of such acts, regardless of whether these acts or threats
9 have been reported to law enforcement officers.

10 ~~(44)~~(13) “Stalking” means conduct as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 1061
11 (stalking) or 1063 (aggravated stalking), and includes a threat of such acts,
12 regardless of whether these acts or threats have been reported to law
13 enforcement officers.

14 ~~(42)~~(14) “Substitute address” means the Secretary’s designated address
15 for the Address Confidentiality Program.

16 § 1152. ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM; APPLICATION;
17 CERTIFICATION

18 (a) An adult person, a parent, or a legal guardian acting on behalf of a
19 minor, or a legal guardian acting on behalf of an incapacitated person may
20 apply to the Secretary of State to have an address designated by the Secretary
21 serve as the person’s address or the address of the minor or incapacitated

1 person. The Secretary of State shall approve an application if it is filed in the
2 manner and on the form prescribed by the Secretary of State, and if it contains:

3 (1) a statement made under oath by the applicant that:

4 (A) the applicant, or the minor or incapacitated person on whose
5 behalf the application is made;

6 (i) is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or
7 human trafficking; or

8 (ii) is a person providing, assisting another person in obtaining, or
9 obtaining for themselves reproductive health care services or gender-affirming
10 health care services in this State;

11 (B) the applicant fears for ~~his or her~~ the applicant's safety or ~~his or~~
12 ~~her~~ the applicant's children's safety, or the safety of the minor or incapacitated
13 person on whose behalf the application is made;

14 (C) the parent or legal guardian applying on behalf of a minor or
15 incapacitated person has legal authority to act on the person's behalf;

16 (D) if the applicant is under the supervision of the Department of
17 Corrections, the applicant has notified the Department of the actual address
18 and the applicant authorizes the release of the actual address to the
19 Department; and

1 (E) if the applicant is required to report the actual address for the Sex
2 Offender Registry under 13 V.S.A. chapter 167, subchapter 3, the applicant
3 authorizes the release of the actual address to the Registry;

4 (2) a designation of the Secretary as agent for purposes of service of
5 process and for the purpose of receipt of mail;

6 (3) the mailing address and e-mail address where the applicant can be
7 contacted by the Secretary and the telephone number or numbers where the
8 applicant can be called by the Secretary;

9 (4) the new address or addresses within Vermont that the applicant
10 requests not be disclosed for the reason that disclosure will increase the risk of
11 domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, ~~or~~ human trafficking, harassment,
12 intimidation, or threats; and

13 (5) the signature of the applicant and the name of any individual or
14 representative of any office who assisted in the preparation of the application
15 and the date on which the applicant signed the application.

16 (b) Applications shall be filed directly with the Office of the Secretary or
17 through a certified applicant assistant.

18 (c) Upon receipt of a properly completed application, the Secretary shall
19 certify the applicant as a Program participant. Applicants shall be certified for
20 four years following the date of filing; unless the certification is withdrawn or

1 cancelled before that date. The Secretary shall by rule establish a renewal
2 procedure.

3 (d) A person who knowingly provides false or incorrect information to the
4 Secretary as required by this chapter may be prosecuted under 13 V.S.A.
5 § 2904.

6 (e) A Program participant shall notify the Secretary of State of a change of
7 actual address within seven days ~~of~~ following the change of address.

8 (f) The Civil or Family Division of Washington County Superior Court
9 shall have jurisdiction over petitions for protective orders filed by Program
10 participants pursuant to 12 V.S.A. §§ 5133 and 5134, to sections 1103 and
11 1104 of this title, and to 33 V.S.A. § 6935. A Program participant may file a
12 petition for a protective order in the county in which ~~he or she~~ the participant
13 resides or in Washington County to protect the confidentiality of ~~his or her~~ the
14 participant's address.

15 * * *

16 § 1157. ASSISTANCE FOR PROGRAM APPLICANTS

17 The Secretary of State shall make available a list of State and local agencies
18 and nonprofit agencies that provide counseling and shelter services to victims
19 of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking to assist
20 persons applying to be ~~program~~ Program participants pursuant to subdivision
21 1152(a)(1)(A)(i) of this title. Such information provided by the Office of the

1 Secretary or designees to applicants shall in no way be construed as legal
2 advice.

3 * * *

4 § 1160. ADOPTION OF RULES

5 (a) The Secretary of State shall adopt rules necessary to perform ~~his or her~~
6 the Secretary's duties under this subchapter relating to:

7 (1) program application and certification;

8 (2) certification cancellation;

9 (3) agency use of designated addresses and exceptions;

10 (4) voting by Program participants; and

11 (5) recording of vital statistics for Program participants.

12 (b) All such rules shall conform with the findings and intent of the General
13 Assembly, as described in section 1150 of this title, and shall be designed with
14 an understanding of the needs and circumstances of ~~victims of domestic~~
15 ~~violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking~~ Program participants.

16 * * * Effective Dates * * *

17 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATES

18 (a) This section and Secs. 1–7 shall take effect on passage.

19 (b) Sec. 8 shall take effect on September 1, 2023.

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(Committee vote: _____)

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE