

**Vermont Child Poverty Council:
Legislative Update on Council's 2013 Recommendations**

I. Council Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	LEGISLATIVE ACTION
Support H.270 (An act relating to providing access to publicly funded prekindergarten education)	Act 166 requires that no fewer than 10 hours per week of publicly funded prekindergarten education be available for 35 weeks annually to each prekindergarten child whom a parent or guardian wishes to enroll in an available, prequalified program operated by a public school or a private provider.
Support S.35 (An act relating to establishing and regulating licensed dental practitioners)	S.35 was reported favorably out of the Senate Committee on Government Operations and was referred to the Senate Committee on Finance where it died on the wall.
Policy resolution to end child homelessness	Policy resolution was not introduced
Create payment alternatives for traffic fines	Act 128 changes the current system of automatically suspending a person's license for failure to pay a traffic fine indefinitely until the person pays off the fine. Sec. 3 limits the suspension period for failure to pay a traffic fine to 120 days, and explicitly gives the hearing officer authority to enlarge the 30-day period that a person has to pay off a fine before his or her license is suspended.
Amend the Council's charge	Act 104 authorizes the Vermont Child Poverty Council to meet an unlimited number of times during the legislative session. Legislative members of the Council cannot receive compensation or reimbursement for expenses for participation in meetings held during the legislative session. Nonlegislative members who are not otherwise compensated and reimbursed for participation in Council meetings are entitled to compensation and reimbursement for expenses for participation in meetings at all times.

II. Subcommittee Recommendations

SUBCOMMITTEE	RECOMMENDATION	LEGISLATIVE ACTION
Housing and Homelessness	Provide full statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board	\$15,950,936 was appropriated to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board; \$15,154,840 of which was from the property transfer tax. This is an 8.2% increase in the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's property transfer tax allocation. (The Governor recommended a 9% increase.)
Housing and Homelessness	Increase Emergency Solutions Grant Program to \$1.2 million	Act 179 provides that \$1,092,000 of the appropriation to DCF shall be granted to community agencies for homeless assistance by preserving existing services, increasing services, or increasing resources available statewide. These funds may be granted alone or in conjunction with federal Emergency Solutions Grants Funds. Grant decisions shall be made with assistance from the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness. (\$792,000 was appropriated for the Emergency Solutions Grant in FY14.)
Housing and Homelessness	Expand Family Supportive Housing Demonstration Program	The appropriation for the family supportive housing program was increased from \$400,000 to \$600,000 in FY15.
Housing and Homelessness	Double State's rental subsidy program	Vermont's rental subsidy program was doubled from \$500,000 in FY14 to \$1 million in FY15.
Health and Nutrition	Expand the Summer Meals Program	No known legislative action taken
Health and Nutrition	Expand the Multigenerational Summer Program	No known legislative action taken
Health and Nutrition	Support passage of S.35	[See above]
Health and Nutrition	Create new dental hygiene positions within the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Act 179 authorizes one classified Public Health Dental Hygienist position within VDH, which will serve WIC clinics.

<p>Workforce and Education</p>	<p>Support community action agencies that provide parenting training, day care, and early education</p>	<p>Act 179 includes funds for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). Specifically, the budget allocates \$360,000 to bring the CCFAP eligibility guidelines up to the 2014 Federal Poverty Level.</p> <p>In addition, language was added to create supplemental child care grants. The provision permits the Commissioner to create a supplemental grant in extreme cases and where the child care program meets the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides full-time child care year round; • Serves infants and toddlers; • Is located in a high poverty area without access to public transportation as determined by the Commissioner; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains a 5 STARS rating; • Maintains a caseload in which 80% of enrollees receive 100% child care financial assistance; and • Receives child care financial assistance payments as its primary source of program revenue.
<p>Workforce and Education</p>	<p>Support early childhood educators, including their collective bargaining rights</p>	<p>Act 187 allows early care and education providers to unionize. The bargaining unit is composed of licensed home child care providers, registered home child care providers, and legally exempt child care providers who have an agreement with DCF to accept a subsidy. Mandatory subjects of bargaining are limited to child care subsidy reimbursement rates and payment procedures; professional development; the collection of dues and disbursement to the exclusive representative; agency fees and disbursement to the exclusive representative; and procedures for resolving grievances.</p> <p><i>* Possible future agenda item: impact of Harris v. Quinn decision on Act 187</i></p>
<p>Workforce and Education</p>	<p>Continue free school meals</p>	<p>No known legislative action</p>

Workforce and Education	Increase child care financial assistance to 50% of market rates	No legislative action to this degree; cost was estimated at \$10 million
Workforce and Education	Increase infant and toddler differential rate	No known legislative action; cost was estimated between \$3-4 million
Workforce and Education	Keep child care eligibility guidelines in line with existing federal poverty guidelines	Child care eligibility was updated and approximately \$812,448 was appropriated to the Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) to meet existing obligations to pay bonuses for new STARS programs and those programs increasing their STARS level.
Workforce and Education	Provide prekindergarten programming for all Vermont children, including equal access to State funding for all providers	[See above]
Workforce and Education	Explore alternatives to school disciplinary policies that remove students from the classroom	No known legislative action
Workforce and Education	Continue efforts to dissuade young people from inopportune parenthood	No known legislative action
Workforce and Education	Explore pending proposals to address the cost of higher education	There are 3 pieces of legislation that addressed higher education costs. Act 199 creates the Vermont Strong Scholars Loan Forgiveness Program. Act 148 requires a study by the Higher Education Subcommittee of the Prekindergarten-16 Council and others regarding the ratio of State funding to student tuition at public colleges and the university. Also, Act 179 includes language excluding graduate programs and distance learning programs from the requirement that Vermont students pay no more than 40% of out-of-state tuition, which may result in higher tuition costs for those students, but is supposed to make the programs more viable overall.

Workforce and Education	Invest in jobs and asset development	Act 199 directs the Commissioner of Labor to study and report on expanding internship opportunities for 15-18 year olds. It also creates the Vermont Strong Scholars and Internship Initiative.
Workforce and Education	Increase micro-business and Individual Development Account programs funding	Act 173 creates the Self-Employment Assistance Program, a program under which an individual is eligible to receive an allowance in lieu of regular benefits for the purpose of assisting that individual in establishing a business and becoming self-employed.
Workforce and Education	Eliminate Reach Up asset tests and increase earned income disregard	Act 198 increased the earned income disregard in the Reach Up program from the first \$200.00 per month of earnings plus 25 percent of the remaining unsubsidized earnings to the first \$250.00 per month of earnings plus 25 percent of the remaining unsubsidized earnings.
Workforce and Education	Invest in initiatives for micro-business, matched savings, credit repair, and financial literacy	No known legislative action
Workforce and Education	Increase benefit amount to participating Reach Up families	No known legislative action
Transportation	Allow Reach Up participants to pay off traffic fines through community service	No known legislative action
Transportation	Allow Reach Up participants to drive to/from work, medical appointments and Reach Up appointments on a driver's license suspended due to unpaid fines	No known legislative action

Transportation	Increase availability of public transportation, especially in rural areas	Increases to the VTrans budget will fund new commuter routes between Northfield and Montpelier, an additional mid-day run between Marshfield and Montpelier and between Burlington and Montpelier, and an additional run in White River Junction which provides service to multiple low-income housing projects. Another project is the western corridor intercity bus service from Milton, VT to Albany, NY by way of Burlington, Middlebury, Rutland, and Bennington as well as a run between Rutland and White River Junction.
Transportation	Expand existing Individual Development Account program to all for savings related to car purchases	No known legislative action
Child Care	Support passage of H.270	[See above]

*In addition to the Council's recommendations, another legislative initiative impacting the Council's jurisdiction includes a change to the GA emergency housing program by Act 133. Previously a recipient of temporary housing was required to furnish 50% of his or her income toward the cost of temporary housing. This act capped the recipient's contribution at 30%.