

**Vermont Child Poverty Council:
Legislative Update on Council's 2014 Recommendations**

I. Council Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	LEGISLATIVE ACTION
Ensure that Vermont's most vulnerable children and families are protected from budget cuts that could put their health, safety, and livelihoods further at risk.	No specific legislative action taken.
End child homelessness in Vermont.	<p>H.471, An act relating to ending child homelessness in Vermont, was introduced as a short-form bill and referred to the House Committee on Human Services.</p> <p>Act 58 continues flexibility in General Assistance (GA) housing program for FY 2016. It allows GA housing funds to be used for temporary housing in catastrophic situations and for vulnerable populations. It allows up to \$100,000 of GA funding to be used for flexible funding to prevent homelessness or address other needs for at-risk families and youth, if the funds are not needed for GA. It also appropriates \$1,092,000 of the FY 2016 GA appropriation to community agencies for homeless assistance.</p> <p>H.C.R. 1, adopted by House and Senate on January 16, 2015, recognized January 8, 2015 as Homelessness Awareness Day at State House.</p>
Require all Vermont agencies and recipients of State funds to share responsibility for addressing child poverty and for improving the financial stability and well-being of Vermont's children.	No known legislative action taken.

II. Subcommittee Recommendations

SUBCOMMITTEE	RECOMMENDATION	LEGISLATIVE ACTION
Housing and Homelessness	The General Assembly should resolve to eliminate child and youth homelessness in the State by 2020.	H.471, An act relating to ending child homelessness in Vermont, was introduced as a short-form bill and referred to the House Committee on Human Services.
Housing and Homelessness	Vermont's temporary rental subsidy and Housing First programs should prioritize helping families with school-age children to remain housed continuously within the same school district. When that is not possible, these programs should provide transportation assistance so that each affected child can continue in his or her school of origin through the end of the school year.	No known legislative action taken.
Housing and Homelessness	The General Assembly should work with the Governor to expand and improve the State's motel voucher program so that no family in Vermont with minor children need spend even one night without shelter.	Act 58 continues flexibility in General Assistance (GA) housing program for FY 2016. It allows GA housing funds to be used for temporary housing in catastrophic situations and for vulnerable populations. It allows up to \$100,000 of GA funding to be used for flexible funding to prevent homelessness or address other needs for at-risk families and youth, if the funds are not needed for GA. It also appropriates \$1,092,000 of the FY 2016 GA appropriation to community agencies for homeless assistance.
Housing and Homelessness	Vermont's Department of Labor should collaborate with human services agencies and youth advocacy organizations to implement proposed federal changes to the Workforce Education and Training Fund's (WETF) youth eligibility and	No known legislative action taken.

	<p>spending requirements. In particular, the Department should consider that the proposed reallocation of dollars spent on out-of-school youth, set to increase from 30% to 75% of the overall budget, could be used in part to support youth who lack or who are at risk of losing safe and secure housing.</p>	
Housing and Homelessness	<p>The General Assembly should work with the Governor to adopt and implement all of the recommendations of the Governor’s Council on Pathways from Poverty concerning housing and homelessness.</p>	<p>No known legislative action taken.</p>
Education	<p>The Governor should set a goal of developing a uniform statewide data system to collect, track, and publicly report on school discipline. This data should be disaggregated by income, race and ethnicity, age, gender, disability, English-language proficiency, foster care status, homelessness status, and immigration status. It should be cross-tabulated by both student offense type and frequency of incidences of suspension, expulsion, restraint, seclusion, referral to law enforcement, and arrest.</p>	<p>Senate Committee on Education requested report on school discipline from Agency of Education by January 15, 2016.</p>
Education	<p>The committees of jurisdiction should solicit testimony from stakeholders concerning school discipline in Vermont, including testimony on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the disproportionate impact of school discipline on historically disadvantaged 	<p>S.67 (An act relating to school discipline reform) was referred to the Senate Committee on Education, which took extensive testimony. The Senate Education Committee also requested a report on school discipline from the Agency of Education by January 15, 2016. House Education Committee took testimony on school</p>

	<p>categories of students, such as students from low-income families, students of color, and students with disabilities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how schools can reduce exclusionary discipline, increase safety for students and teachers, and improve achievement scores through improved school climate; and • how schools can ensure student rights, family cooperation, and ongoing education for students who must be temporarily excluded from the school building for safety reasons. 	discipline as well.
Education	The General Assembly and Governor should offer continued support for the publicly funded prekindergarten initiative passed by the General Assembly in 2014.	Pre-K will be fully funded through the Education Fund.
Education	The committees of jurisdiction should take testimony concerning the effects of adverse childhood events on educational development.	No specific legislative action taken.
Education	In the long term, the General Assembly and Governor should focus on the prenatal and early childhood development needs of children born into poverty, as well as recognize the special importance of providing individualized education, summer educational opportunities, and an affordable post-secondary education to low-income children and families.	Act 48 (An act relating to making miscellaneous technical and other amendments to education laws), Sec. 10 requires the Expanded Learning Opportunities Working Group of the Pre-K–16 Council to develop recommendations for the Secretary of Education relating to the design and implementation of an Expanded Learning Opportunities Grant Program that would award grants to increase access to expanded learning opportunities across Vermont.

		<p>Act 58 (Budget), Sec. E.504.1 removes dual enrollment program requirement that the student's school district of residence pay a portion of student's tuition. 50% of funding will come from the Next Generation Initiative Fund and 50% from the Education Fund.</p> <p>Act 58 (Budget), Sec. E.608 directs the Secretary of Administration and a Pre-K–16 subcommittee to develop a proposal for performance-based funding for public higher education.</p>
Education	The General Assembly and Governor should act, or continue to act, on the Council's eight recommendations concerning education listed in its 2009 report to the General Assembly.	Act 46 (An act relating to making amendments to education funding, education spending, and education governance), Sec. 49 requires Secretaries of Education and of Human Services to develop a plan for maximizing collaboration and coordination between the Agencies in delivering social services to Vermont public school students and their families.
Economic Security and Empowerment	In order to create new jobs, build assets, and promote financial skills, the General Assembly should work with the Governor to increase investments in the Micro Business Development Program and Individual Development Accounts; create a Vermont matched savings program; and fund financial coaching, credit repair, and banking programs to restore and enhance economic opportunities for low-income families.	Act 55 (An act relating to consumer protection laws), Sec. 3 creates the Vermont Financial Literacy Commission.
Economic Security and Empowerment	The General Assembly should establish and fund a comprehensive study concerning transportation barriers for low-income individuals and families.	Upon request of the chairs of the Judiciary Committees, the Secretary of Transportation is leading a working group to study the potential costs and benefits of various approaches for

	<p>Specifically, this study should examine existing vehicle and ridership programs, public transportation, and current regulations involving vehicle fines, fees, repairs, and credit, and it should inform future comprehensive legislation designed to address these barriers.</p>	<p>reducing the number and duration of driver’s license suspensions in Vermont and for mitigating collateral consequences of suspensions.</p>
<p>Economic Security and Empowerment</p>	<p>The General Assembly should give more families access to quality child care by increasing its investment in Vermont’s Child Care Financial Assistance Program. It should raise the base rate to 50% of the current market rate, with the long-term goals of raising the base rate to 75% of the current market rate, raising eligibility for the program to 300% of the federal poverty level, and mandating that program rates and guidelines be adjusted annually and kept current.</p>	<p>Act 58 (Budget), Sec. C.101 creates a Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High-Quality, Affordable Child Care.</p>
<p>Economic Security and Empowerment</p>	<p>The General Assembly should work with the Governor to develop a Vermont Children’s Savings Program that increases opportunities for college and career success for all Vermont students; that engages and incentivizes positive post-secondary education savings behavior by low-income families; and that provides financial literacy education for all Vermont children and parents in cooperation with local public education systems. The Governor should explore funding this Program through philanthropic organizations.</p>	<p>Act 45 established the Vermont Universal Children’s Higher Education Savings Account Program.</p>

<p>Economic Security and Empowerment</p>	<p>Vermont’s Department of Labor should collaborate with human services agencies and youth advocacy organizations in implementing proposed federal changes to the Workforce Education and Training Fund’s (WETF) youth eligibility and spending requirements. In particular, the Department should consider that, because of Vermont’s comparatively high secondary school graduation rate, the proposed reallocation of dollars from supports for in-school youth to those for out-of-school youth may not, without careful assessment, reach those youth with highest needs.</p>	<p>No known legislative action taken.</p>
<p>Economic Security and Empowerment</p>	<p>The General Assembly should increase Reach Up grants by continuing its work to reduce or eliminate benefit cliffs, including applying income disregards and eliminating asset tests. This would both create incentives that reward families for getting ahead and help to reduce the Department for Children and Families’ caseloads.</p>	<p>No known legislative action taken.</p>
<p>Economic Security and Empowerment</p>	<p>The General Assembly should allocate budget resources for the implementation of the Transitional Benefits Alternative, in order to provide five additional months of 3SquaresVT benefits to households exiting Reach Up. This would offer beneficiaries some protection from the benefit cliff.</p>	<p>No known legislative action taken.</p>
<p>Economic Security and Empowerment</p>	<p>The General Assembly should increase its investment in the Low-Income Weatherization</p>	<p>No known legislative action taken.</p>

	Program, increase LIHEAP grant assistance, and fully fund Crisis Fuel needs.	
Health and Nutrition	Pass legislation creating a mid-level oral health provider, called a dental practitioner, to increase access to dental care.	<p>S.20, An act relating to establishing and regulating dental therapists, passed the Senate and was referred to the House Committee on Human Services.</p> <p>A companion bill, H.1, An act relating to establishing and regulating licensed dental practitioners, was referred to the House Committee on Government Operations.</p>
Health and Nutrition	The General Assembly should provide for earned sick time for all employees in Vermont. This would operate to strengthen Vermont families, protect public health, reduce workers' compensation costs, and reduce the strain on hospital emergency departments.	<p>H.187, An act relating to absence from work for health care and safety, passed the House and was referred to the Senate Rules Committee.</p> <p>A similar bill, S.15, An act relating to absence from work for health care and safety, was referred to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.</p>
Health and Nutrition	The General Assembly and the Governor should continue to assess ways to move toward a universal policy of paid parental leave that supports all new Vermont families.	<p>H.339, An act relating to paid family leave, was referred to the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs.</p> <p>A similar bill, S.119, An act relating to paid parental leave, was referred to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.</p>