

S.280

An act relating to the Advisory Council for Strengthening Families

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. CHILD POVERTY ADVISORY COUNCIL

(a) Creation. There is created the Advisory Council for Strengthening Families to examine structural issues in Vermont that create conditions that prevent families from moving out of poverty. The Advisory Council shall provide guidance and recommend legislation to the General Assembly that either reduces or mitigates the effects of childhood poverty.

(b)(1) Voting membership. The Advisory Council shall be composed of the following 13 voting members:

(A) three members of the Senate, not all from the same political party, appointed by the Committee on Committees, including one member from the Committee on Education and one member from the Committee on Health and Welfare;

(B) three members of the House, not all from the same political party, appointed by the Speaker of House, including one member from the Committee on Education and one member from the Committee on Human Services;

(C) a member appointed by Voices for Vermont's Children;

(D) a member appointed by the Vermont Low Income Advocacy

Council;

(E) a member appointed by Vermont Legal Aid;

(F) a member appointed by the Vermont Coalition for Disability

Rights;

(G) a member appointed by the Vermont Affordable Housing

Coalition;

(H) a nongovernmental designee of the Child and Family Trauma

Work Group who does not otherwise represent an organization with

membership on this Council; and

(I) an employee of the prekindergarten through grade 12 public

education delivery system in Vermont appointed jointly by the Executive

Directors of the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont Principals'

Association, and the Vermont Council of Special Education Coordinators.

(2) Nonvoting membership. The Advisory Council shall be composed  
of the following five nonvoting members or designees:

(A) the Secretary of Education;

(B) the Secretary of Human Services;

(C) the Commissioner for Children and Families;

(D) the Commissioner of Health; and

(E) the Commissioner of Labor.

(c) Powers and duties. The Advisory Council shall examine structural issues in Vermont that create conditions that prevent families from moving out of poverty and shall provide related guidance and recommendations to the General Assembly. It shall serve as an educational forum for both its members and the public. The Council shall use data to understand better existing and emerging challenges to children and families living in poverty.

(d) Assistance. The Advisory Council shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Council.

(e) Work products.

(1) Recommendations. On or before January 1 of each year, the Advisory Council may submit a list of recommendations and legislative priorities from the previous calendar year to the General Assembly that are aimed at reducing or mitigating the effects of childhood poverty.

(2) Legislation. On or before November 15 of each year, the Advisory Council may prepare legislation for introduction by one or more of its legislative members that contains any of the Advisory Council's recommendations for reducing or mitigating the effects of childhood poverty.

(3) Compilation of minutes. On or before January 1 of each year, the Advisory Council shall submit to the General Assembly a compilation of its meeting minutes from the previous calendar year, which summarizes the Advisory Council's activities and decisions.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Speaker of the House or designee shall call the first meeting of the Advisory Council to occur on or before July 1 of each year.

(2) Each year the Council shall select a chair from among its legislative members at the first meeting. The Council may select a vice chair from among its legislative members.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(4)(A) The Advisory Council shall cease to exist on July 1, 2028.

(B) Five years prior, in 2023, the Advisory Council shall conduct a midterm review of its achievements and effectiveness using results-based accountability. Among any other benchmarks that the Advisory Council chooses to measure pursuant to subdivision (C) of this subdivision (4), it shall review, as compared to 2016:

(i) the number and percentage of children living in families at 50 percent, 100 percent, and 200 percent of the federal poverty level; and

(ii) the number and percentage of children living in families paying more than 30 percent of their cash income for housing and related expenses.

(C) On or before January 1, 2019, the Advisory Council shall identify any additional benchmarks it plans to measure during its 2023 midterm review.

(g) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Advisory Council serving in his or her capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 406 for not more than six meetings.

(2) Other members of the Advisory Council who are not employees of the State of Vermont and who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their attendance shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six meetings.

(3) Payments to members of the Advisory Council authorized under this subsection shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.