

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Health and Welfare to which was referred Senate Bill
3 No. 53 entitled “An act relating to a universal, publicly financed primary care
4 system” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends
5 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and
6 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE; INTENT

8 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to create and implement a
9 program of universal, publicly financed primary care for all Vermont residents.
10 The program should ensure that Vermonters have access to primary health care
11 without facing financial barriers that might otherwise discourage them from
12 seeking necessary care.

13 (b) The General Assembly continues to support the principles for health
14 care reform enacted in 2011 Acts and Resolves No. 48, Sec. 1a, and plans to
15 use universal primary care as a platform for a tiered approach to achieving
16 universal health care coverage.

17 (c) In order to improve Vermonters’ access to essential health care services,
18 it is the intent of the General Assembly that universal access to primary care
19 services should be available without cost-sharing.

20 Sec. 2. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE; FINDINGS

21 The General Assembly finds that:

1 (1) Universal access to primary care will advance the health of
2 Vermonters by preventing disease and by addressing Vermonters' health care
3 problems before they become more serious and more costly. A large volume
4 of research from throughout the United States concludes that increased access
5 to primary care enhances the overall quality of care and improves patient
6 outcomes.

7 (2) Universal access to primary care will reduce systemwide health care
8 spending. This conclusion is well documented. A study completed in
9 accordance with 2016 Acts and Resolves No. 172, Sec. E.100.10 and
10 submitted on November 23, 2016 found significant cost savings in a review of
11 data from nonuniversal public and private primary care programs in the United
12 States and around the world. One reason for these savings is that better access
13 to primary care reduces the need for emergency room visits and hospital
14 admissions.

15 (3) The best primary care program is one that provides primary care for
16 all residents without point-of-service patient cost-sharing or insurance
17 deductibles for primary care services. The study completed in accordance with
18 2016 Acts and Resolves No. 172, Sec. E.100.10 found that primary care
19 cost-sharing in many locales decreased health care utilization and affected
20 individuals with low income disproportionately.

1 (4) A universal primary care program will build on and support existing
2 health care reform efforts, such as the Blueprint for Health and the all-payer
3 model.

4 (5) A universal primary care program can be structured in such a way as
5 to create model working conditions for primary care physicians, who are
6 currently overburdened with paperwork and administrative duties, and who are
7 reimbursed at rates disproportionately lower than those of other specialties.

8 (6) The costs of a universal primary care program for Vermont were
9 estimated in a study ordered by the General Assembly in 2015 Acts and
10 Resolves No. 54, Secs. 16–19 and submitted on December 16, 2015.

11 Sec. 3. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE; DRAFT OPERATIONAL MODEL;

12 REPORT

13 (a)(1) The Green Mountain Care Board shall convene, facilitate, and
14 supervise the participation of certified accountable care organizations, Bi-State
15 Primary Care, and other interested stakeholders with applicable subject matter
16 expertise to develop a draft operational model for a universal primary care
17 program.

18 (2)(A) Using as its basis the primary care service categories and primary
19 care specialty types described in 33 V.S.A. § 1852, the draft operational model
20 shall address at least the following components:

1 (i) who would be eligible to receive publicly financed universal
2 primary care services under the program;

3 (ii) who would deliver care under the program and in what
4 settings;

5 (iii) how funding for the primary care services would move
6 through the health care system; and

7 (iv) how to ensure maintenance of records demonstrating quality
8 of care without increasing the administrative burden on primary care providers.

9 (B) In addition to the components described in subdivision (A) of this
10 subdivision (2), the draft operational model may also include recommendations
11 regarding the specific services that should be included in the universal primary
12 care program and a methodology or benchmark for determining reimbursement
13 rates to primary care providers.

14 (3) The Green Mountain Care Board and participating stakeholders shall
15 submit the draft operational model for universal primary care on or before
16 January 1, 2019 to the House Committee on Health Care, the Senate
17 Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance, the Department of Human
18 Resources, and the Department of Vermont Health Access.

19 (4) All relevant State agencies shall provide timely responses to requests
20 for information from the Green Mountain Care Board and participating

1 stakeholders developing the draft operational model for universal primary care
2 pursuant to this subsection.

3 (5) The Senate Committee on Health and Welfare may meet up to five
4 times following the adjournment of the General Assembly in 2018 to provide
5 guidance and receive updates from the Green Mountain Care Board and
6 participating stakeholders developing the draft operational model for universal
7 primary care pursuant to this subsection.

8 (b) On or before July 1, 2019, the Departments of Human Resources and of
9 Vermont Health Access, as the administrative departments with expertise and
10 experience in the administration and oversight of health benefit programs in
11 this State, shall provide to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate
12 Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance their assessments of the
13 draft operational model plan for universal primary care and their
14 recommendations with respect to implementation of the universal primary care
15 program.

16 (c) On or before July 1, 2019, the Department of Financial Regulation shall
17 provide to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate Committees on
18 Health and Welfare and on Finance its recommendations for appropriate
19 mechanisms for the State to employ to obtain reinsurance and to guarantee the
20 solvency of the universal primary care program.

1 Sec. 4. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE; LEGAL ANALYSIS; REPORT

2 The Office of the Attorney General, in consultation with the Green
3 Mountain Care Board and the Department of Financial Regulation, shall
4 conduct a legal analysis of any potential legal issues regarding implementation
5 of a universal primary care program in Vermont, including whether there are
6 likely any legal impediments due to federal preemption under the Employee
7 Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and whether the program could be
8 designed in a manner that would permit Vermont residents to continue to be
9 eligible under federal law to use a health savings account established in
10 conjunction with a high-deductible health plan. The Office shall submit its
11 legal analysis on or before January 1, 2019 to the House Committee on Health
12 Care and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance.

13 Sec. 5. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE; SCOPE OF SERVICES AND
14 PROVIDERS; REPORT

15 (a) The Green Mountain Care Board shall convene a working group of
16 interested stakeholders with applicable subject matter expertise to develop:

17 (1) recommendations for the specific services and providers that should
18 be included in the universal primary care program, including the scope of the
19 mental health and substance use disorder services;

20 (2) methods to resolve coordination of benefits issues in the universal
21 primary care program; and

1 (3) recommendations for strategies to address other issues associated
2 with the development and implementation of the universal primary care
3 program.

4 (b) On or before October 1, 2018, the Green Mountain Care Board shall
5 provide the working group’s recommendations to the House Committee on
6 Health Care and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on
7 Finance.

8 Sec. 6. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE; CONDITIONS

9 (a) In addition to the plans, assessments, and analyses required by Secs. 3,
10 4, and 5 of this act, the General Assembly adopts the following implementation
11 timeline for the universal primary care program:

12 (1) submission by the Agency of Human Services of a final
13 implementation plan for universal primary care on or before January 1, 2020;

14 (2) enactment by the General Assembly of the funding mechanism or
15 mechanisms during the 2020 legislative session;

16 (3) application by the Agency of Human Services to the U.S.
17 Department of Health and Human Services for all necessary waivers and
18 approvals for universal primary care on or before January 1, 2021; and

19 (4) coverage of publicly financed primary care services for Vermont
20 residents under the universal primary care program beginning on or before
21 January 1, 2022.

1 (b) Implementation of the universal primary care program shall occur only
2 if the following conditions are met:

3 (1) the program will not increase the administrative burden on primary
4 care providers;

5 (2) the program will provide reimbursement amounts for primary care
6 services that are sufficient to attract an adequate number of primary care
7 providers to participate;

8 (3) the program has appropriate financing in place to support the
9 covered services while ensuring the continued solvency of the program;

10 (4) the program will include coverage for basic mental health care;

11 (5) the program will not include coverage for dental care services;

12 (6) the program will provide clear information to health care providers
13 and consumers regarding which services are covered and which services are
14 not covered under the universal primary care program; and

15 (7) the program adheres to the principles of 2011 Acts and Resolves No.
16 48, Sec. 1a.

17 Sec. 7. 18 V.S.A. § 9458 is added to read:

18 § 9458. EXCESS HOSPITAL REVENUE; INVESTMENTS IN

19 UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE

20 Each hospital that generated revenue in excess of the budget approved by
21 the Green Mountain Care Board pursuant to this subchapter and the hospital's

1 actual expenses for the most recently closed hospital fiscal year may invest,
2 subject to Green Mountain Care Board approval, a portion of the excess
3 revenue to support the development and implementation of Vermont’s
4 universal primary care program by contributing the excess revenue to the
5 Universal Primary Care Fund established by 33 V.S.A. § 1853.

6 Sec. 8. 33 V.S.A. chapter 18, subchapter 3 is added to read:

7 Subchapter 3. Universal Primary Care

8 § 1851. DEFINITIONS

9 As used in this section:

10 (1) “Health care facility” shall have the same meaning as in
11 18 V.S.A. § 9402.

12 (2) “Health care provider” means a person, partnership, or corporation,
13 including a health care facility, that is licensed, certified, or otherwise
14 authorized by law to provide professional health care services in this State to
15 an individual during that individual’s medical care, treatment, or confinement.

16 (3) “Health service” means any treatment or procedure delivered by a
17 health care professional to maintain an individual’s physical or mental health
18 or to diagnose or treat an individual’s physical or mental condition or
19 intellectual disability, including services ordered by a health care professional,
20 chronic care management, preventive care, wellness services, and medically
21 necessary services to assist in activities of daily living.

1 (4) “Primary care” means health services provided by health care
2 professionals who are specifically trained for and skilled in first-contact and
3 continuing care for individuals with signs, symptoms, or health concerns, not
4 limited by problem origin, organ system, or diagnosis. Primary care does not
5 include dental services.

6 (5) “Vermont resident” means an individual domiciled in Vermont as
7 evidenced by an intent to maintain a principal dwelling place in Vermont
8 indefinitely and to return to Vermont if temporarily absent, coupled with an act
9 or acts consistent with that intent. The Secretary of Human Services shall
10 establish specific criteria for demonstrating residency.

11 § 1852. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE

12 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that all Vermont residents
13 should receive publicly financed primary care services.

14 (1) The following service categories should be included in a universal
15 primary care program when provided by a health care provider in one of the
16 primary care specialty types described in subdivision (2) of this subsection:

17 (A) new or established patient office or other outpatient visit;

18 (B) initial new or established patient preventive medicine evaluation;

19 (C) other preventive services;

20 (D) patient office consultation;

21 (E) administration of vaccine;

1 (F) prolonged patient service or office or other outpatient service;

2 (G) prolonged physician service;

3 (H) initial or subsequent nursing facility visit;

4 (I) other nursing facility service;

5 (J) new or established patient home visit;

6 (K) new or established patient assisted living visit;

7 (L) other home or assisted living facility service;

8 (M) alcohol, smoking, or substance use disorder screening or
9 counseling;

10 (N) all-inclusive clinic visit at a federally qualified health center or
11 rural health clinic; and

12 (O) mental health.

13 (2) Services provided by a licensed health care provider in one of the
14 following primary care specialty types should be included in universal primary
15 care when providing services in one of the primary care service categories
16 described in subdivision (1) of this subsection:

17 (A) family medicine physician;

18 (B) registered nurse;

19 (C) internal medicine physician;

20 (D) pediatrician;

21 (E) physician assistant or advanced practice registered nurse;

1 (F) psychiatrist;

2 (G) obstetrician/gynecologist;

3 (H) naturopathic physician;

4 (I) geriatrician;

5 (J) registered nurse certified in psychiatric or mental health nursing;

6 (K) social worker;

7 (L) psychologist;

8 (M) clinical mental health counselor; and

9 (N) alcohol and drug abuse counselor.

10 (b) For Vermont residents covered under Medicare, Medicare should
11 continue to be the primary payer for primary care services, but the State of
12 Vermont should cover any co-payment or deductible amounts required from a
13 Medicare beneficiary for primary care services.

14 § 1853. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY CARE FUND

15 (a) The Universal Primary Care Fund is established in the State Treasury as
16 a special fund to be the single source to finance primary care for Vermont
17 residents.

18 (b) Into the Fund shall be deposited:

19 (1) transfers or appropriations from the General Fund, authorized by the
20 General Assembly;

1 (2) revenue from any taxes established for the purpose of funding
2 universal primary care in Vermont;

3 (3) if authorized by waivers from federal law, federal funds from
4 Medicaid and from subsidies associated with the Vermont Health Benefit
5 Exchange established in subchapter 1 of this chapter;

6 (4) all contributions by hospitals of their excess hospital revenue
7 pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9458; and

8 (5) the proceeds from grants, donations, contributions, taxes, and any
9 other sources of revenue as may be provided by statute or by rule.

10 (c) The Fund shall be administered pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7,
11 subchapter 5, except that interest earned on the Fund and any remaining
12 balance shall be retained in the Fund. The Agency of Human Services shall
13 maintain records indicating the amount of money in the Fund at any time.

14 (d) All monies received by or generated to the Fund shall be used only for
15 payments to health care providers for primary care health services delivered to
16 Vermont residents and to cover any co-payment or deductible amounts
17 required from Medicare beneficiaries for primary care services.

18 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

19 This act shall take effect on passage.

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3 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE