



State of Vermont
Office of the Secretary of State

Office of Professional Regulation
 89 Main Street, 3rd Floor
 Montpelier, VT 05620-3402
 www.sec.state.vt.us

James C. Condos, Secretary of State
Christopher D. Winters, Deputy Secretary
S. Lauren Hibbert, Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Ann Cummings, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance

From: S. Lauren Hibbert, Director, Office of Professional Regulation

Date: April 18, 2019

Re: H.527, An act relating to Executive Branch and Judicial Branch fees: APRN Fees

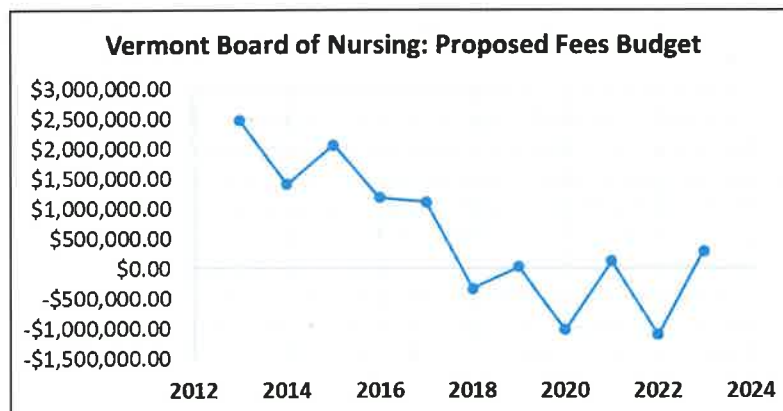
As requested, OPR is providing you with more information to determine whether the APRN fee proposal is necessary and whether any further reductions to the fee, beyond those already made in the House, are possible.

Under Vermont law, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are required to obtain a registered nurse license and an advanced practice endorsement.

	Current Fees		Proposed Fees	
	Application	Renewal	Application	Renewal
Registered Nurses	60.00	140.00	110.00	200.00
APRNs	75.00	75.00	100.00	125.00
Total:	135.00	215.00	210.00	325.00

Licenses are valid for two years. Under this proposal, APRNs would pay an additional **\$55 per year** for their license to practice.

2013	\$ 2,467,286.93
2014	\$ 1,403,098.93
2015	\$ 2,055,417.93
2016	\$ 1,180,333.43
2017	\$ 1,111,485.88
2018	\$ (338,533.70)
2019	\$ 20,622.79
2020	\$ (1,024,234.68)
2021	\$ 115,831.96
2022	\$ (1,109,894.58)
2023	\$ 289,348.88



In determining how best to distribute the cost of regulating the nursing profession, OPR has focused on the higher wage earners, rather than LNAs, for example. APRN application review

and ongoing regulation is among the most complex handled by our office because APRNs in Vermont, unlike APRNs in a majority of states, are authorized to act as independent primary-care providers, with all the patient-safety implications that responsibility entails.

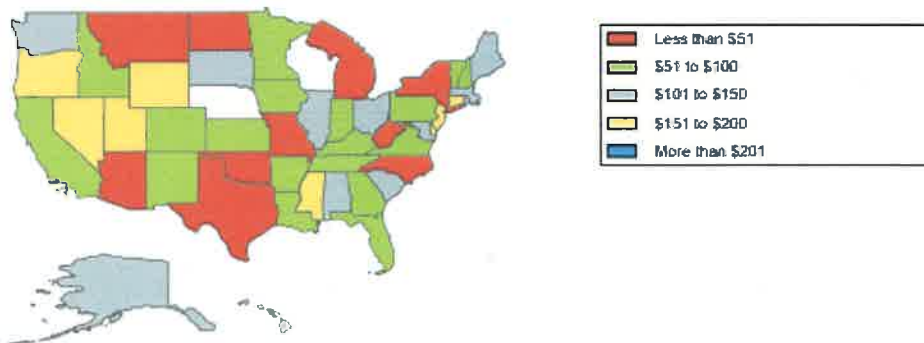
The renewal fee for the APRN endorsement was reduced by \$100 in the House. By law, the nursing budget is contained within a silo: the program must cover its expenses with revenue generated by licensing fees. Nursing is OPR's largest regulatory program, with an annual budget of roughly \$2 Million. The fees proposed in H.527 will add approximately \$500K/yr to the nursing silo. This is required revenue to address the Nursing Board's current and projected deficit. Without the revenue added in H.527, the Nursing Board will continue to operate into the negative.

Vermont currently has 997 registered nurses with the APRN endorsement. A reduction in the renewal fee for APRN endorsement will reduce overall revenue, meaning that costs of operating the Nursing Board will have to be picked up by the other more numerous and lower paid professionals (LNAs, MNAs, LPNs, and RNs).

As a workforce issue, it is important to note that adequate funding is essential to adequate service. Vermont's license processing times are some of the fastest in the nation. During a recent nursing strike, OPR licensed over 2,000 nurses within 6 weeks. A majority of those applications were processed within 45 minutes.

As a public protection issue, complaint processing, investigation and enforcement times would also suffer if not resourced properly.

The below graphic from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing shows that Vermont's current APRN renewal fee is within the national average. This does not reflect the RN costs nationally. RN costs are lower in many states because the license population is larger and therefore the costs of administration of the regulatory program are spread over many more individuals.



*PN BONs and US Territories are not displayed on the map. For detailed information, please see the text responses below.

Responses	Jurisdictions	Number of Boards	Percentage of Boards Responding
Less than \$51	AZ, MI, MO, MT, NC, ND, NY, OK, TX, WV-RN	10	19%
\$51 to \$100	AR, CA-RN, CO, FL, GA, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA-RN, MN, NE-APRN, NH, NM, PA, TN, VA, VT	19	36%
\$101 to \$150	AK, AL, CNMI, HI, IL, MA, MD, ME, OH, RI, SC, SD, VI, WA	14	26%
\$151 to \$200	CT, DE, MS, NJ, NV, OR, UT, WY	8	15%
More than \$201	DC, GU	2	4%

As you heard from the APRN witness, licensing fees are not the sole cost of ongoing licensure for an APRN. Most jurisdictions require continuing education. Vermont is one of four states that do not require continuing education. Vermont is also one of 21 “full-practice states” meaning that APRNs in Vermont have independent practice authority, freeing them to offer more billable services than their counterparts elsewhere, and to do so without the expensive and sometimes exploitative supervisory arrangements that prevail in states that do not offer independent practice. These factors are much more significant than the licensing fee in determining whether Vermont is attractive to APRNs considering practice here. An APRN can do more in Vermont, and can become licensed more quickly in Vermont, than in almost any other state.

Vermont does have a nursing shortage, but underfunding the nurse-regulatory program is not the solution. Low licensing fees do not create a larger workforce. OPR and the State of Vermont are committed to increasing the nursing supply. Unfortunately, the nursing shortage is national in scope, and salaries in other states are higher than in Vermont. We would urge the Committee to leave the already-reduced House fee proposal as-is.

From the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:

