

Vermont Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan: Overview

Ena Backus

Director of Health Care Reform, Agency of Human Services

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Agenda

1. Primary Charge and Process for Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan
2. Background and Context for Current Health Care Workforce Challenges
3. Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan: Overview of Recommendations

Vermont Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan: Primary Charge

Act 155 of 2020, An act relating to increasing the supply of nurses and primary care providers in Vermont, establishes that,

The Director of Health Care Reform in the Agency of Human Services shall maintain a current health care workforce development strategic plan that continues efforts to ensure that Vermont has the health care workforce necessary to provide care to all Vermont residents.

In maintaining the strategic plan, the Director or designee shall consult with an advisory group composed of the following 11 members, at least one of whom shall be a nurse, to develop and maintain the strategic plan.

Advisory Group Membership

Representation Category	Representative	Alternate
Green Mountain Care Board's Primary Care Advisory Group	Katherine Marvin, MD	
Vermont State Colleges	Angie Smith, DNP, RN and Patricia Moulton (replacement due to job change)	
Area Health Education Center's workforce initiative	Elizabeth Cote	Charles D. MacLean, MD
Federally qualified health centers	Stephanie Pagliuca	Mary Kate Mohlman, PhD
Vermont hospitals	Steve Gordon	Devon Green, JD, MHCDS
Physicians	Jessa Barnard, JD	
Mental health professionals	Anne Bilodeau	
Dentists	Patrick Gallivan	
Naturopathic physicians	Barron Glassgow	Joshua Green, ND
Home health agencies	Johanna L. Beliveau, RN	Jill Olson, MPA
Long-term care facilities	Laura Pelosi, JD	
Chair (Director of Health Reform or designee)	Ena Backus	

Thank you to the subject matter experts from State government who participated in the advisory group meetings but were not formal Advisory members: Blueprint for Health, Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Green Mountain Care Board, Office of Professional Regulation, Office of Rural Health and Primary Care.

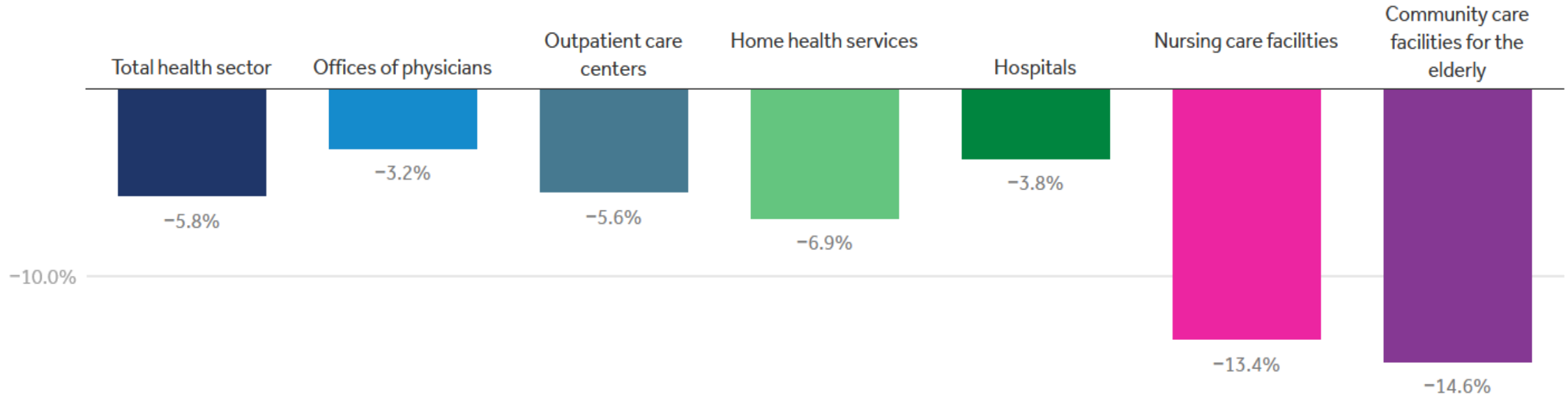
Process

- Plan submitted to the Green Mountain Care Board on October 15, 2021.
- Plan presented to the Green Mountain Care Board on October 15, 2021
- Plan revisions presented on November 10, 2021
- Board voted unanimously to approve plan on November 12, 2021

Current Context

- We are currently experiencing what has been termed the “Great Resignation”
 - Prompted by the pandemic, Americans are quitting their jobs in record numbers.
 - The US Chamber of Commerce reports that employers in **South Dakota, Nebraska, and Vermont** are experiencing the greatest challenge as the total jobs available outnumber the total workers to fill them.
- Unlike past recessions where health sector jobs continued to grow, the Kaiser Family Foundation reports health sector jobs falling sharply along side jobs in other sectors.

Percent difference in November 2021 health employment by setting, actual vs. projected (in the absence of a pandemic), seasonally adjusted



Note: November 2021 data are preliminary. Projected values are calculated by applying the average monthly growth rate between January 2017-January 2020 to March 2020 through the latest month.

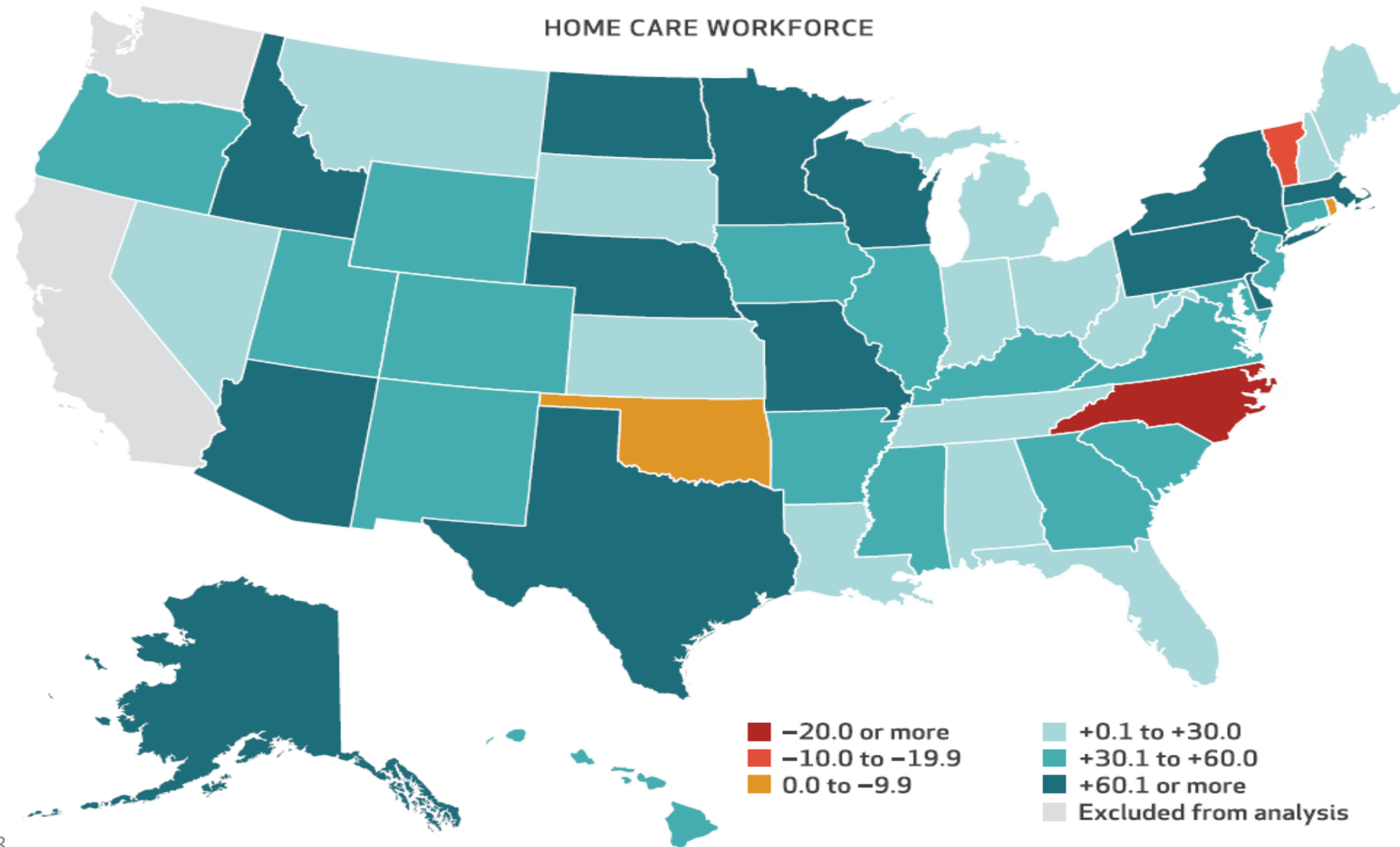
Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Survey \(CES\)](#) • [Get the data](#) • [PNG](#)

Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

Vermont's Home Care Workforce Has Declined Over the Last Decade

EXHIBIT 1

Geographic variation in home care workforce changes per 1,000 people with disabilities, 2009-20



Source: Health Affairs
40, No. 12 (2021)
Occupational
Employment and
Wage Statistics
Program and
American Community
Survey, 2009-2020

Current Context

- To maintain Vermonters' access to health care services, health providers are relying on traveling staff.
- From hospital fiscal year 2020 to projected 2021, the use of travelers for hospitals who have reported information has increased 26% from 270 to 341 positions while hospital costs associated with these services has increased 50% from \$50 million to \$75 million.

Growth in Vermont Skilled Nursing Facilities Expenses for Traveling Staff

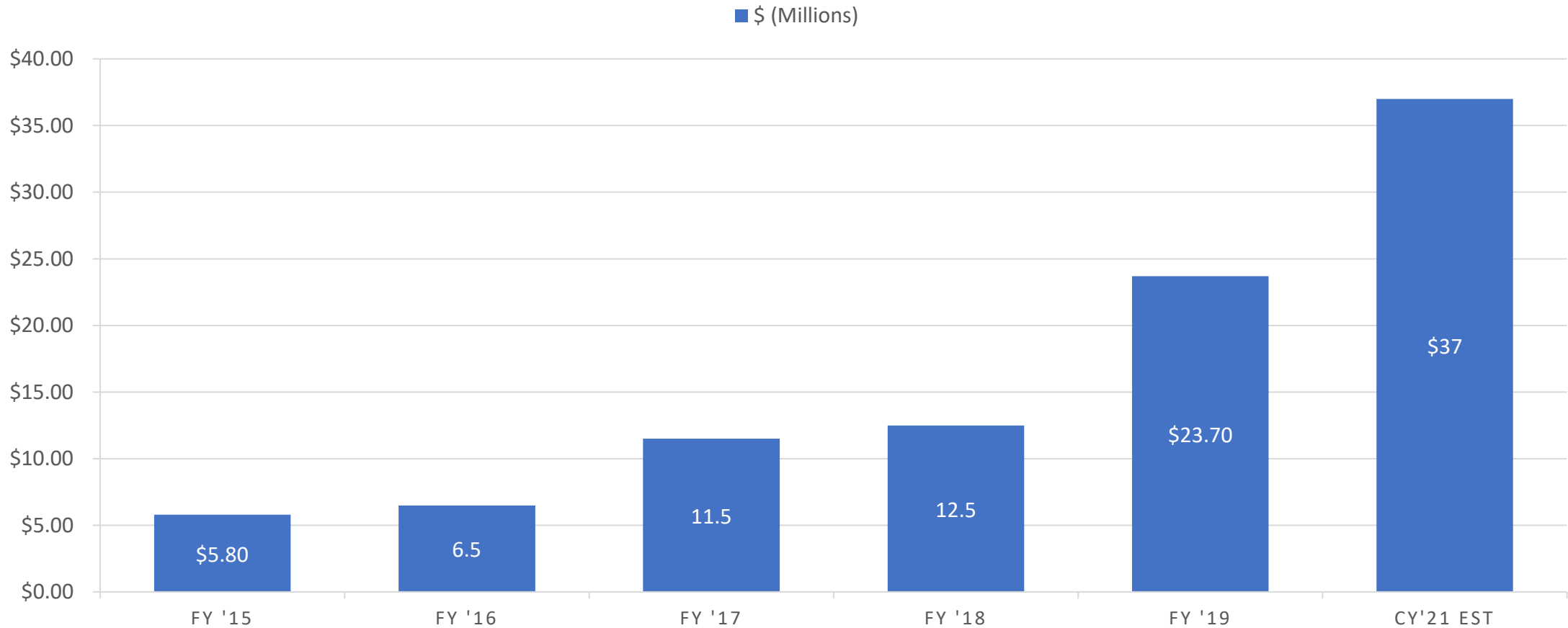


Chart comprised of data from the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) division of rate setting and the Vermont Health Care Association

Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan

The Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan recommends health care workforce development strategies in the following domains:

- Financial Incentives
- Education and Training
- Recruitment and Retention
- Regulation
- Practice
- Federal Policy

Financial Incentives for Health Care Workers to Live and Work as Permanent Employees in Vermont

Advisory Group Recommendation	Action Required By	Timeframe
Offsetting Educational Costs		
Broaden and expand loan repayment to more professional types.	AHEC	Complete analysis 2022
Increase scholarship funding created by Act 155 of 2020 and identify permanent funding source.	State Interagency Task Team	2022
Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing scholarship program available to Vermonters who attend dental school.	VDH, AHEC, VSAC	2022
Make financial assistance options for the health care workforce clear, transparent, and easy to find.	VSAC, regional training programs, employers	2022
Promoting Permanent Health Care Employment and Residency in Vermont		
Revisit tax incentive proposals.	State Interagency Task Team, Legislature	2021/2022
Identify financial barriers to the recruitment and retention of the non-licensed workforce.	State Interagency Task Team	2022
Recommend one-time funds for employers to attract permanent employees.	State Interagency Task Team	2021/2022
Consider longer-term grant incentive program.	State Interagency Task Team	2022

Education and Training to Strengthen the Health Care Workforce

Advisory Group Recommendation	Action Required By	Timeframe
Increase enrollment in nursing programs.	OPR, Schools of Nursing, clinical sites/health care orgs	2022/2023
Support transition-to-practice programs for professional roles.	State Interagency Task Team	2022
Strengthen incentives for preceptors for all professions.	UVM College of Medicine, UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences	2022/2023
Explore opportunities to expand family practice residency programs.	UVM College of Medicine, UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences	2022
Modify curriculum to introduce primary care earlier in medical school.	UVM College of Medicine	2022/2023
Advance a coordinated approach to promote health care careers in K-12 educational settings.	AHEC	2022/2023
Establish a Physician Assistant Education Program.	Vermont State Colleges, Legislature	2022/2023
Modify curriculum to prepare students for work in interdisciplinary teams across the continuum of care.	Vermont State Colleges	2022/2023 and beyond
Develop and identify strategies to streamline advancement through the nursing career ladder and upskill existing staff.	Vermont State Colleges, UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences, employers	2022/2023
Ensure that health care career education is offered to all students before leaving middle school.	AOE	2022/2023
Advertise and recruit for existing apprenticeship opportunities supported by the Department of Labor.	DOL	2021/2022

Recruiting and Retaining Health Professionals

Advisory Group Recommendation	Action Required By	Timeframe
Inventory and highlight state programs that support recruitment and retention of health care professionals.	State Interagency Task Team, DOL	2022
Modify or expand programs that support working and living in Vermont.	State Interagency Task Team, ACCD	2022
Create marketing campaign to promote health care careers in Vermont.	ACCD, State Interagency Task Team, regional health care recruitment centers	2022/2023
Promote health care careers to New Vermonters.	The Office of Refugee Resettlement	2022
Develop a cross system strategy to utilize Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act.	AHS	2022
Support Organizational Wellness and Peer Support Programs.	Director of Trauma Prevention and Resilience Development, DMH, employers	2022
Reduce Administrative Burden.	Legislature	2022

Regulatory Strategies to Address Health Care Workforce

<u>Advisory Group Recommendation</u>	Action Required By	Timeframe
Advertise and promote the Fast Track for health care professional licensure for all OPR regulated professions.	OPR, health care employers, ACCD	2022
Differentiate Canadian health care workers from international health care workers and create an expedited path to licensure.	OPR	2022
Consider reducing licensing barriers for telehealth practice, taking into account recommendations of the workgroup created by Act 21 of 2021.	OPR, Legislature	2022
Evaluate further opportunities to remove barriers to licensure for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder treatment professionals.	OPR	2022-2027
Consider temporarily waiving licensure fees for “first time” Licensed Nursing Assistants (LNA).	State Interagency Task Team, OPR	2022

Modifications to Practice to Address Workforce Challenges

Advisory Group Recommendation	Action Required By	Timeframe
Maximize Medicare flexibility and reimbursement through Vermont's All-Payer Accountable Care Organization Model Agreement.	AHS, GMCB	2022/2023
Develop commercial reimbursement models for audio-only services.	DFR	2022
Expand telehealth coverage.	DVHA	2022
Make telehealth billing requirements clear.	DFR	2022
Establish a statewide telepsychiatry program in emergency departments.	DMH, VAHHS	2022/2023

Federal Action: Highlight on Traveling Staffing Agencies

- **Support strategies to minimize the increasing trend towards travel staffing that is resulting in unsustainable cost increases for health care employers.**
 - **Anti-poaching provisions directed at travel staffing agencies.**
 - **Price-gouging prohibitions.**
 - **Reforming federal tax incentives.** Health care organizations find it difficult to compete with travel staffing agencies due to the federal tax benefits under this business model, including:
 - non-taxed housing stipend
 - non-taxed per diems, such as meals and incidentals
 - non-taxed travel reimbursements

QUESTIONS?

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