

**State of Vermont**

Department of Mental Health  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Representative, Michael Marcotte, Chair, House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development  
Representative, Mary S. Hooper, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations  
Representative, William J. Lippert Jr., Chair, House Committee on Health Care

**FROM:** Emily Hawes, Commissioner

**DATE:** April 12, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Broadening Eligibility to include the Mental Health Workforce Crisis and Vermont Relocation Incentives in [H.703](#)

In the Senate version of the economic development bill [H.159](#), as passed by the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, we are aware that the following language was removed, which was intended to broaden eligibility for the New and Remote Worker Program relocation incentive:

*(III) the individual becomes employed in one of the “Occupations with the Most Openings” identified by the Vermont Department of Labor in its “Short Term Employment Projections 2020-2022.*

DMH wanted to express appreciation for this change by the Senate Committee and emphasize not only the positive impact this program has had in growing Vermont’s overall workforce, but also how removing this eligibility requirement will have a positive impact on the recruitment for Designated and Specialized Service Agencies in Vermont that serve our most vulnerable Vermonters who experience developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. These occupations, along with several other critical health care related occupations, are currently not eligible for the relocation incentive because they do not appear on the list.

Additionally, we would like to recommend that this broadening of eligibility be carried over into [H. 703](#). Broadening the scope would create the ability for the agencies to offer this incentive to individuals across direct care staff, such as case managers, residential staff, crisis clinicians, and school-based staff.

In the current environment where Vermonters are waiting in Emergency Departments due to mental health crises and where there is a challenge recruiting qualified individuals to provide community-based mental health care, the Department of Mental Health would like to see every possible recruitment tool utilized.

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This chart shows the current vacancies being reported by Vermont Care Partners for Designated and Specialized Service Agencies (which is out of approximately 5,000 staff.). Broadening eligibility criteria would provide another option to increase recruitment efforts in significant need.

Thank you for your consideration. Do not hesitate to reach out for more information.

