

2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. E.126b

Sec. E.126b TASK FORCE ON AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH

CARE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Task Force on Affordable, Accessible Health Care to explore opportunities to make health care more affordable for Vermont residents and employers.

(b) Membership. The Task Force may be composed of the following six members:

(1) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

(2) three current members of the Senate, not all from the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees.

(c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall explore opportunities to make health care, including prescription drugs, more affordable for Vermont residents and employers, including identifying potential opportunities to leverage federal flexibility and financing and to expand existing public health care programs. In completing its work, the Task Force shall:

(1) keep in mind the principles for health care reform enacted in 2011 Acts and Resolves No. 48 and codified at 18 V.S.A. § 9371;

(2) identify the primary drivers of health insurance premium increases in Vermont;

(3) review the findings and recommendations from previous studies and analyses relating to the affordability of health care coverage in Vermont;

(4) determine actions the State can take without federal assistance to address the unmet health care needs of Vermont residents and employers;

(5) analyze the long-term trends in out-of-pocket costs in Vermont in individual and small group health insurance plans and in large group health insurance plans; and

(6) identify opportunities to decrease health care disparities, especially those highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and those attributable to a lack of access to affordable health care services.

(d) Assistance.

(1) To the extent that applicable funds are appropriated in Sec. B.1106 of this act, the Joint Fiscal Office shall contract with a consultant to provide the Task Force with technical and research assistance in carrying out the duties set forth in subsection (c) of this section. The consultant's primary focus shall be on monitoring and reviewing opportunities made available by the Biden Administration to expand access to affordable health care through existing public health care programs or through emerging opportunities to address the unmet health care needs of Vermont residents and employers. The consultant shall remain available to assist the committees of jurisdiction as needed throughout the 2022 legislative session.

(2) In addition, the Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the Office of Legislative Counsel, and the Joint Fiscal Office.

(f) Reports.

(1) On or before December 1, 2021, the Task Force and the consultant shall brief the leadership of the House Committee on Health Care and of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on their preliminary findings.

(2) On or before January 15, 2022, the Task Force and the consultant shall present to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance their findings and recommendations regarding the most cost-effective ways to expand access to affordable health care for Vermonters without health insurance and those facing high health care costs and the various options available to implement these recommendations.

(g) Meetings.

(1) The first meeting of the Task Force shall occur on or before August 15, 2021.

(2) The Task Force shall select House and Senate co-chairs from among its members at its first meeting. The Co-Chairs shall alternate acting as Chair at Task Force meetings.

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

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on January 15, 2022.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, the members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than five meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.