

**No. 54. An act relating to the Vermont basic needs budget.**

(H.157)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. BASIC NEEDS BUDGET TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE;

REPORT

(a) Creation. The Basic Needs Budget Technical Advisory Committee is created to update the methodology utilized in calculating the basic needs budget pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

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

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

(3) the Secretary of Human Services or designee;

(4) one member, appointed by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund;

(5) one member, appointed by the Society for Human Resources Management, Vermont State Council; and

(6) one member, appointed by Capstone Community Action.

(c) Duties.

(1)(A) On or before November 1, 2023, the Committee shall study the topics set forth in subdivision (B) of this subdivision (1) and submit a written

report to the Joint Fiscal Committee, the House Committee on General and Housing, and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs that details the Committee's findings and provides recommendations for revisions to the methodology for determining the basic needs budget pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526. The report may also include recommendations for legislative action.

(B) In preparing the report required pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (1), the Committee shall study the following topics:

(i) the current methodology for calculating the basic needs budget and determining what constitutes a livable wage;

(ii) potential changes to the methodology for calculating the basic needs budget and determining what constitutes a livable wage, including the identification of not more than seven household configurations to be utilized in future determinations of the basic needs budget and livable wage; and

(iii) potential changes to 2 V.S.A. § 526 to account for public policy changes, data availability, or any other factors that have had an impact on any aspects of the basic needs budget calculation or the cost to Vermonters of basic needs as that term is defined in 2 V.S.A. § 526(a)(1).

(2) The Committee shall:

(A) take testimony from subject-matter experts to assist with data analysis and methodological considerations; and

(B) take testimony from a variety of stakeholders, including employers and employees and organizations that represent employers and employees.

(d) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative and technical assistance of the Joint Fiscal Office, the technical assistance of the Department of Labor's Economic and Labor Market Information Division, and the legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Counsel.

(e) Meetings.

(1) The Joint Fiscal Office shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before August 15, 2023.

(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its legislative members at the first meeting.

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

(4) The Committee shall cease to exist on January 30, 2025.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than five meetings.

(2) Other members of the Committee who are not State employees shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than five meetings.

(g) Appropriations.

(1) The sum of \$7,000.00 is appropriated to the General Assembly from the General Fund in fiscal year 2024 for per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Committee.

(2) The sum of \$10,000.00 is appropriated to the Joint Fiscal Office from the General Fund in fiscal year 2024 for costs related to retaining experts and other services provided to the Committee by the Joint Fiscal Office.

Sec. 2. 2025 BASIC NEEDS BUDGET REPORT; METHODOLOGY

Notwithstanding any provision of 2 V.S.A. § 526(c) to the contrary, in preparing the basic needs budget report due January 15, 2025, the Joint Fiscal Office shall utilize the methodology and household configurations recommended by the Basic Needs Budget Technical Advisory Committee established pursuant to Sec. 1 of this act.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

Date Governor signed bill: June 8, 2023