

1 H.358

2 Introduced by Representatives Masland of Thetford, Holcombe of Norwich,

3 Anthony of Barre City, Beck of St. Johnsbury, Garofano of

4 Essex, Hooper of Burlington, Priestley of Bradford, and

5 Stebbins of Burlington

6 Referred to Committee on

7 Date:

8 Subject: Health; municipalities; community nurse

9 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish a
10 grant program to fund the provision of services by community nurses in
11 coordination with municipalities.

12 An act relating to the provision of grants for community nurses working in
13 collaboration with municipalities

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

15 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

16 The General Assembly finds that:

17 (1) Our Vermont population case mix includes a growing proportion of
18 people with health risks and adverse health conditions. This case mix includes
19 people with chronic illnesses, people who are aging, people who are recovering

1 from hospitalization, people who have disabilities, and people who do not
2 engage or interact with public health initiatives, including immunization.

3 (2) When Vermonters are able to live within their own communities
4 near friends and family, they are happier and healthier than they would be
5 when isolated or removed to an unfamiliar location. Receiving support in their
6 communities can keep people in their homes and in their communities at lower
7 social and financial cost and with greater well-being than if they were
8 institutionalized.

9 (3) Coordinated community-based supports that help Vermonters remain
10 in their home communities have proven essential to providing consistent health
11 care, access to social interaction, and improved mental health of the people
12 they serve. Existing research demonstrates that community nurse programs
13 lead to reduced acute care utilization.

14 (4) Transportation and access present unique challenges in rural areas.
15 Community nurses and health care coordinators bridge this gap by bringing
16 frontline services and care coordination to people, instead of assuming people
17 will be equally able to get to care.

18 (5) In communities where nurses or community health care coordinators
19 are under the umbrella of town governance and are recognized as an important
20 municipal service, their contributions are more visible and more accessible to
21 the population that needs them.

1 (6) Community nurses and health care coordinators can provide a front
2 door to choices for health care for members of the community who have
3 trouble accessing care, thereby getting care to them early in ways that prevent
4 the need for expensive or more intensive care later.

5 (7) Community nurses and health care coordinators are trusted members
6 of the community who can help community members understand and navigate
7 preventative care in ways that make communities healthier and enhance
8 community and individual well-being.

9 (8) Community nurses and health care coordinators can provide a range
10 of hands-on and personal frontline interventions and supports that are
11 significantly more cost effective than emergency room and hospital visits.

12 Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. chapter 222 is amended to read:

13 Chapter 222. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

14 § 9490. COMMUNITY NURSE GRANT PROGRAM

15 (a) Grant program established. The Department of Health shall administer
16 a grant program for the purpose of establishing community nurse programs in
17 Vermont communities. The Commissioner shall award grants of up to
18 \$10,000.00 per municipality to fund a community nurse program in the
19 municipality, provided the municipal applicant meets the criteria set forth in
20 statute and rule. As used in this section, “municipality” means a city, town, or
21 incorporated village in the State.

1 (b) Grant eligibility.

2 (1) General criteria. A municipality may submit a grant application to
3 the Department each year during the period specified by the Department in
4 rule. Successful grant applicants shall:

5 (A) demonstrate that a 501(c)(3) or other qualifying nonprofit
6 organization is available to receive and administer the grant funding to pay the
7 community nurse or nurses for services, or, alternatively, demonstrate that the
8 municipality has a separate financial account that will be used solely for
9 administering funds for the municipality's community nurse program;

10 (B) demonstrate that the municipality's community nurse program
11 structure has fiscal and organizational transparency;

12 (C) provide documentation that the legislative body of the
13 municipality has approved the community nurse program;

14 (D) describe the proposed collaboration between the community
15 nurse and the municipality, including the community nurse's anticipated
16 duties, work hours, and any specialized training necessary to provide services;
17 and

18 (E) describe the municipality's plan for ongoing funding for the
19 community nurse program once the municipality is no longer eligible for
20 grants under this section.

21 (2) Limitations.

1 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

2 (a) Fiscal year 2024. In fiscal year 2024, \$200,000.00 is appropriated to
3 the Department of Health from the General Fund for the purpose of funding
4 grants pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9490 (community nurse grant program).

5 (b) Fiscal year 2025 and later. It is the intent of the General Assembly that
6 \$200,000.00 be appropriated annually to the Department of Health from the
7 General Fund to fund the community nurse grant program established in 18
8 V.S.A. § 9490.

9 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

10 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.