

1 S.183

2 An act relating to reenvisioning the Agency of Human Services

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

4 Sec. 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

5 (a) Since its establishment in 1970, Vermont’s Agency of Human Services
6 has grown significantly in both size and scope. In its current form, the Agency
7 is composed of six departments: the Department for Children and Families;
8 the Department of Corrections; the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and
9 Independent Living; the Department of Health; the Department of Mental
10 Health; and the Department of Vermont Health Access, along with several
11 divisions and many offices, boards, and councils. The Agency’s budget
12 comprises more than half of the overall State budget, and the programs and
13 benefits administered by the Agency and its departments have an impact on the
14 lives of all Vermonters.

15 (b) The purpose of this act is to create a meaningful process through which
16 the Agency, its departments, and the individuals and organizations with whom
17 they engage most can collaborate to identify opportunities to build on past
18 successes and to make improvements for the future.

19 Sec. 2. REENVISIONING THE AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES;

20 REPORT

21 (a) The Secretary of Human Services, in collaboration with the
22 commissioner of each department within the Agency of Human Services and in

1 consultation with relevant commissions, councils, and advocacy organizations;
2 community partners; individuals and families impacted by the Agency and its
3 departments; State employees; and other interested stakeholders, shall consider
4 options for reenvisioning the Agency of Human Services, such as restructuring
5 the existing Agency of Human Services or dividing the existing Agency of
6 Human Services into two or more separate agencies.

7 (b) The Secretary of Human Services and the other stakeholders identified
8 in subsection (a) of this section shall evaluate the current structure of the
9 Agency of Human Services, identify potential options for reenvisioning the
10 Agency and engage in a cost-benefit analysis of each option, and develop one
11 or more recommendations for implementation.

12 (c) The Agency shall solicit open, candid feedback from the stakeholders
13 identified in subsection (a) of this section to inform the evaluation,
14 identification of options, and development of recommendations. To the extent
15 feasible, the Agency shall engage existing boards, committees, and other
16 channels to collect input from individuals and families who are directly
17 impacted by the work of the Agency and its departments.

18 (d) On or before February 1, 2025, the Secretary shall present to the House
19 Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs, on Health Care,
20 and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Government
21 Operations and on Health and Welfare an update on the status of the

1 stakeholder process and development of recommendations as set forth in this
2 section.

3 (e) On or before November 1, 2025, the Secretary shall provide the
4 recommendations developed by the Secretary and stakeholders to the House
5 Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs, on Health Care,
6 and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Government
7 Operations and on Health and Welfare, including the following:

8 (1) the rationale for selecting the recommended option or options;

9 (2) the likely impact of the recommendations on the departments within
10 the Agency and on the Vermonters served by those departments, including
11 Vermonters who are members of historically marginalized communities;

12 (3) how the recommendations would center the needs of and lead to
13 better outcomes for the individuals and families served by the Agency and its
14 departments and make the Agency more accountable to the Vermonters whom
15 it serves;

16 (4) how the recommendations could improve collaboration, integration,
17 and alignment of the services currently provided by the Agency and its
18 departments and how they could enhance coordination and communication
19 among the departments and with community partners;

20 (5) how the recommendations could address the workforce and
21 personnel capacity challenges that the Agency and its departments encounter;

1 (6) how the recommendations could address the facility challenges that
2 the Agency and its departments encounter;

3 (7) how the recommendations could strengthen the use of technology to
4 improve access to programs and services, increase accountability, enhance
5 coordination, and expand data collection and analysis;

6 (8) a transition and implementation plan for the recommendations that is
7 designed to minimize confusion and disruption for individuals and families
8 served by the Agency and its departments, as well as for Agency and
9 departmental staff;

10 (9) a proposed organizational chart for any recommended
11 reconfigurations; and

12 (10) the estimated costs or savings associated with the
13 recommendations.

14 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on passage.