



The Office of the Health Care Advocate
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Office of the Health Care Advocate: FY2025 Funding Request

The Office of the Health Care Advocate (HCA) represents all Vermonters and advocates for accessible and affordable health care. The HCA runs a free and confidential helpline to support Vermonters with issues including how to apply for free and lower-cost health programs, understand their health insurance options, solve billing problems and make complaints. The HCA also runs a policy team that represents Vermonters in health care regulatory proceedings and policy deliberations throughout state government and in the legislature. In the past two years, the HCA has:

- Handled over 6,500 cases for Vermonters related to improving access to care, billing and coverage, eligibility, and health insurance.
- Saved Vermonters at least \$850,000 through reduced bills and/or added benefits.
- Helped draft legislative bills in FY22 & FY23 that expanded access to hospital patient financial assistance policies, expanded access to Dr. Dynasaur for pregnant women and their children regardless of documentation status, improved transparency for pharmacy benefit managers, and raised the Medicaid dental cap.

However, the health care landscape has gotten more complex and expensive. Health care affordability is increasingly under threat. The cost of living, especially the cost of staff health insurance, has rapidly increased. The HCA needs additional funding to meet Vermonters' growing needs.

We ask for an increase of \$153,141.32 to bring total funding for the HCA to \$2,060,563.74 in FY25.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Fisher
Chief Health Care Advocate
Vermont Legal Aid