



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Diane Lanpher, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Rep. Theresa Wood, Chair, House Committee on Human Services
Cc: Rep. Jill Krowinski, Speaker, House of Representatives
Date: March 2, 2023
Subject: Language Recommendations for FY24 Budget

As requested, the House Committee on Human Services (Committee) has reviewed provisions of the Governor's proposed fiscal year 2024 budget. The Committee thanks the House Committee on Appropriations for the opportunity to comment on these provisions.

The Committee has examined the depth of need that exists among Vermonters. It has attempted to be as complete as possible in providing recommendations, however, there are still places where insufficient information has prevented the Committee from sufficiently addressing smaller, nonprofit organizations that primarily contract with the Department for Children and Families. Many of these organizations have not had any increases to their appropriation for many years, while at the same time attempting to serve the constant or increased needs of Vermont's children, youth, and families.

Additionally, the Committee feels that it is particularly important to note that while it agrees with the Department for Children and Families regarding the emergency need for secure stabilization and treatment programs for justice-involved youth, it does not support any permanent programs collocated with law enforcement or on the grounds of, or near correctional facilities. This sends the opposite message for these youth who need support to understand that their life can involve different, more productive choices.

The Committee has completed the attached budget worksheet and the Committee proposes adding the language below to the fiscal year 2024 budget:

Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL)

Sec. X. ADULT DAY PROGRAMS; RATE STUDY

(a) The Department of Vermont Health Access, in collaboration with the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and the Vermont Association of Adult Day Services shall propose payment methodologies that encourage increased enrollment or attendance or both and predictable funding levels for adult day programs.

(b) On or before February 15, 2024, the Department of Vermont Health Access shall submit the report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare. The report shall consider alternative models to support older Vermonters.

Sec. X. DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZE SERVICE AGENCIES; COST OF LIVING
ADJUSTMENT

In fiscal year 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall increase the appropriation to the designated and specialized service agencies in such a manner so as to support a four percent increase to the salaries and benefits to employees in these organizations.

Sec. X. ASSISTIVE COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

Beginning in fiscal year 2025, the Agency of Human Services shall move the appropriation for assistive community care services from the Department of Vermont Health Access to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living.

Department for Children and Families—Child Development Division

Sec. X. PARENT CHILD CENTER NETWORK; EMPLOYEE SALARIES AND
BENEFITS

In fiscal year 2024, increased funding appropriated to the Parent Child Center Network shall be used to increase employee salaries and benefits, and not for new or expanded programming.

Department for Children and Families—Economic Services Division

Sec. E 323.7 REACH AHEAD PILOT PROGRAM

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in 33 V.S.A. chapter 12, funds appropriated to the Department for Children and Families for the Reach Ahead Pilot Program in fiscal year 2024 shall be used to:

(1) enroll families that have left the Reach Up program or the postsecondary education program within the prior 12 months for employment that meets the federal work requirements for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program for the family's size and composition;

(2) increase the amount of monthly food assistance from \$50 to \$100 in the first 12 months of a family's participation in Reach Ahead;

(3) increase the amount of monthly food assistance from \$5 to \$50 in the second 12 months of a family's participation in Reach Ahead; and

(4) provide incentive payments to participating families in the amounts of:

(A) \$1,250, to be paid after participating in the Program for six months;

(B) \$1,000, to be paid after participating in the Program for 12 months;

(C) \$750, to be paid after participating in the Program for 18 months; and

(D) \$750, to be paid after participating in the Program for 24 months.

Sec. E.323.8 REACH AHEAD PILOT PROGRAM

The Department for Children and Families' Economic Services Division shall collect and report data that measures outcomes for participants of the Reach Ahead Pilot Program established in Sec. E.323.7 of this act; the indicators used to measure participant and Pilot Program progress; and the strategies that are implemented to improve quality of life for all children, adults, and families participating in the Reach Ahead Pilot Program.

Sec. E.325. DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES – OFFICE OF
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Of the General Fund appropriation in Sec. B.325 of this act, \$14,789,597 shall be granted to community agencies to assist individuals experiencing homelessness by preserving existing services, increasing services, or increasing resources available statewide. These funds may be granted alone or in conjunction with federal Emergency Solutions Grants funds. Funds shall be administered in consultation with the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness.

Sec. X. 33 V.S.A. § 1103 is amended to read:

§ 1103. ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT LEVELS

(a) Financial assistance shall be given for the benefit of a dependent child to the relative or caretaker with whom the child is living, unless otherwise provided. The amount of financial assistance to which an eligible person is entitled shall be determined with due regard to the income, resources, current basic needs calculation, and maintenance available to that person and, as far as funds are available, shall provide that person a reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health. The Commissioner may fix by rule maximum amounts of financial assistance and act to ensure that the expenditures for the programs shall not exceed appropriations for them consistent with section 101 of this title. In no case shall the Department expend State funds in excess of the appropriations for the programs under this chapter.

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Department for Children and Families—Family Services Division

Sec. X. STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP; FACILITY PLANNING FOR

JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH

(a) The Department for Children and Families shall assemble a stakeholder working group to provide regular input to the Department on the development and implementation of the temporary stabilization facility for youth and on the development of a long-term plan for the high-end system of care.

(b) The stakeholder working group, constituted as a subcommittee of, or drawn from, existing groups or created as a separate group, may include representatives from:

(1) the families of children in the Department’s custody for delinquency offenses;

(2) youth who have been in custody for juvenile offenses;

(3) the Juvenile Defender’s Office;

(4) the Office of State’s Attorneys;

(5) the Family Court;

(6) the Office of Racial Equity;

(7) the Vermont Family Network;

(8) the Vermont Federation of Families;

(9) the Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs;

(10) the Vermont Protection and Advocacy;

(11) the Department of Mental Health;

(12) the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living;

(13) the State Program Standing Committees for Developmental Services,

Children’s Mental Health, and Adult Mental Health; and

(14) any other groups the Department may select.

(c) The Department shall regularly present relevant information to the stakeholder working group established pursuant to this section and review recommendations from the working group regarding:

(1) facility design layout, programming, and policy development for the temporary stabilization facility, including data on the number of cases and types of case mix, as well as likely length of stay; and

(2) the Department's data and assumptions for size, type of treatment, and security levels for future permanent facilities included in the planning process proposed in the fiscal year 2024 capital bill; optimal locations, including whether a campus plan is appropriate; and any plans regarding the use of outside contractors for facility operations, including State oversight of appropriate quality of care.

(d) On or before January 15, 2024, the Department shall develop and submit a strategic plan to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, as part of the overall planning process for development of the high-end system of care, for preventing the disproportionality of youth who are Black, Indigenous, or Persons of Color in staff- or building-secure facilities. The strategic plan shall include mechanisms for collecting necessary data, and the process of development shall include input from relevant public stakeholders.

Sec. X. LUND; SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The Department for Children and Families, in collaboration with Lund, shall develop a sustainability plan that address the unique funding streams that support Lund and the needs of parents in recovery and their children. On or before November 15, 2023, the Department shall submit the sustainability plan to the House Committees on

Appropriations and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare.

Department of Health

Sec. X. ONE-TIME TOBACCO FUND APPROPRIATION;

TOBACCO CONTROL BOARD

(a) In fiscal year 2024, funds are appropriated from the Tobacco Fund to the Department of Health's Division of Substance Use Programs and shall be carried forward in fiscal year 2025 in the amount of \$900,000 for Vermont's Tobacco Control Board for tobacco and substance use disorder prevention and cessation activities.

(b) The Division shall require that information on the use of the funds appropriated in accordance with this section be provided to the Division by grantees in an agreed-upon time frame, including the specific activities supported by the funds, a description of the number of individuals served, and information on the outcomes achieved by this investment. On or before, January 10, 2024, the Division shall report on these metrics to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, to the House Committee on Human Services, and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

Sec. X. HEALTH; SUBSTANCE USE PROGRAMS

In fiscal year 2024, the Department of Health shall provide additional grants from the General Fund in the amount of \$1,850,000 to Vermont's 13 recovery centers, including Jenna's Promise and Vermont Recovery Partners, for recovery center operations. The methods by which these funds are distributed shall be determined by mutual agreement of the Department and the recipient recovery centers. The performance period of these

grants shall be State fiscal year 2024. Recipient recovery centers shall report outcomes to the Department.

Agency of Human Services

Sec. B.1100 FISCAL YEAR 2024 ONE-TIME GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS

(a) In fiscal year 2024, funds are appropriated from the General Fund for new and ongoing initiatives as follows:

* * *

(16) \$30,563,537 to the Agency of Human Services Central Office for the following:

(A) \$1,000,000 to the State Refugee Office for the Employment Assistance Grants program created in 2022 Act and Resolves No. 185, Sec. E.300.2 as amended by the fiscal year 2023 Budget Adjustment Act. Funds remaining at the end of fiscal year 2025 shall revert to the General Fund.

(B) \$25,000 to the State Refugee Office for a comprehensive inventory and needs assessment of Vermont's immigrant community and the organizations providing support to this community.

* * *

(19) \$26,040,000 to the Department for Children and Families for the following:

(A) \$2,000,000 to implement the two-year Reach Ahead Pilot Program. Funds shall be used to increase monthly food assistance benefits to Reach Ahead participants, expand the eligibility window for those leaving Reach Up, and provide incentive payments.

(B) \$1,000,000 to fund a two-year continuation of the Youth Development Independent Living stipends program.

(C) \$40,000 to fund the purchase of a driving school vehicle for the Youth Development Program to support foster and former foster youth access driver's education.

(D) \$16,000,000 to address the estimated need for the Adverse Weather Conditions policy and General Assistance emergency housing hotel and motel expenditures in fiscal year 2024.

(E) \$2,500,000 to the Housing Opportunity Grant Program to expand and provide wrap-around support services for households participating in the General Assistance Emergency Housing program.

(F) \$1,500,000 to Family Supportive Housing to support homeless families with children in their transition to stable housing.

(G) \$3,000,000 to Vermont Food Bank to support increased capacity of services to meet the persistent of food insecurity.

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Sec. E.300.1. FUNDING FOR THE OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE;

VERMONT LEGAL AID

Of the funds appropriated in Sec. B.300 of this act:

(1) \$1,847,406 shall be used for the contract with the Office of the Health Care Advocate; and

(2) \$1,200,000 shall be appropriated to Vermont Legal Aid for the purposes of maintaining current program capacity and addressing increased requests for services, including eviction prevention and protection from foreclosure and consumer debt.

Sec. E.300.2 STATE REFUGEE OFFICE; INVENTORY AND NEEDS

ASSESSMENT; REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

(a) Request for Proposal. On or before September 15, 2023, the State Refugee Office shall issue a request for proposal for a comprehensive inventory and needs assessment of Vermont's immigrant community and the organizations providing support to this community. For purposes of this section, "Vermont's immigrant community" includes refugees, asylum seekers, asylees, humanitarian parolees, immigrants, individuals without a legal immigrant status, and any permanent lawful residents who may have held one of these statuses in the past.

(b) Inventory and Assessment. The State Refugee Office shall contract with an independent third party to conduct the inventory and assessment described in subsection (a) of this section. On or before November 15, 2024, the completed inventory and assessment shall be delivered to the State Refugee Office.

(c) Scope. The inventory and assessment described in subsection (a) of this section shall include the following:

(1) a list of any organizations in the State that formally provide social, housing, health, mental health, or legal support services to Vermont's immigrant community;

(2) a summary of the services provided by each listed organization to Vermont's immigrant community;

(3) the sources of funding supporting each organization;

(4) the relationship with and support provided by the State Refugee Office and any listed refugee agency and the organization, including how each organization's needs, goals, and opportunities are communicated to the State Refugee Office;

(5) how referrals are made to each organization; and

(6) the governing structure of each organization.

(d) Reports.

(1) On or before January 15, 2024, the State Refugee Office shall submit a status update on the request for proposal described in subsection (a) of this section to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

(2) On or before December 1, 2024, the State Refugee Office shall submit a copy of the final inventory and assessment described in subsection (b) of this section to the House Committee on Human Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.