




State of Vermont

AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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TO: Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

FROM: Jenney Samuelson, AHS Secretary 

CC: Adam Greshin, Commissioner of Finance and Management

DATE: April 12th, 2023

SUBJECT: AHS – Policy Observations for FY24 Big Bill – H.494

Sec. B. 1100 MISCELLANEOUS FISCAL YEAR 2024 ONE-TIME APPROPRIATIONS –

- **(m)(3), (n), and (o)(1)** AHS opposes the reduction of funding for the Blueprint for Health Hub and Spoke appropriations from two years to one year. While the House provided among its “waterfall” list of contingent appropriations funding for a second year of the pilot, having uncertain funding for the intended two-year period destabilizes the demonstration. Given the time it will take to ramp-up the program relative to current workforce challenges, and the Blueprint’s administrative entities’ need for the state’s commitment to the pilot effort, as well as to evaluate the pilot’s efficacy, one year of funding is untenable.
- **(o)(2)** In addition to not having been recommended as part of the Governor’s budget, AHS opposes \$1,000,000 in funding directed to any specific recovery housing provider.
- **(o)(4)** AHS opposes the appropriation of \$150,000. The Substance Use Disorder Treatment Certification Rule (pursuant to 8 VSA § 4089b and 18 VSA §§ 102 and 4086) requires certification by the Vermont Department of Health as a preferred provider for any substance use disorder treatment program that receives state or federal funding from the Department. Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform (VCJR) is not certified as a preferred provider.
- **(p)(7)** AHS opposes this initiative. Distinct direct funding for a “CIS rollout” will create a separate system from that which is currently in-progress (CDDIS) and does not meet federal reporting needs. Further, not all CIS partners want the system as proposed in H.494. This will present challenges for systems integration.
- **(p)(8)** While Prevent Child Abuse Vermont is helpful in providing important information to Vermonters, DCF focused its budget priorities toward providing direct services to Vermont families and children. Therefore, we do not propose increasing funding for PCAVT.

Sec. B. 1101(b)(1) WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – DOC Supervisory & Management Professional Development. -- AHS opposes the corresponding language of intent in Sec. F.7, as well as

the associated appropriation. DOC has proactively undertaken steps to address its workforce recruitment and retention challenges, as well as the professional development of its staff, in a manner that aligns with the strategic priorities of its leadership team and with the Administration.

Sec. E.300.4 HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS – AHS opposes this language. As proposed, the group cannot realistically develop and provide recommendations on Vermont’s homeless response and prevention programs and governance systems, including determining measures of success, within the stated timeframe. AHS and DCF already engage heavily in planning to support the new Permanent Supportive Housing Program as well as interim Complex Care teams.

AHS has been advised by legislators pushing for this language, that if the Administration puts forward an Executive Order around a homelessness council, that this language would no longer be needed.

Sec. E.306.3 ADULT DAY PROGRAMS; RATE STUDY – AHS opposes this language. Relative to other rate related requirements either already underway, or included in H.494, the Division of Rate Setting does not have the capacity to engage in a review of payment methodologies for Adult Day providers.

Sec. E.306.4 ASSISTIVE COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES – AHS opposes the proposal to move the ACCS unit from DVHA to DAIL. Relative to the analytical work necessary to assess operational and fiscal implications of such a transition, there is no demonstrable value added by doing so.

Sec. E.335.1 CORRECTIONAL SERVICES; OUT-OF-STATE BEDS -- AHS supports this change, as it addresses long-standing concerns voiced by the legislature in a budget neutral manner. AHS coordinated this proposed change with Finance and Management and the JFO. However, AHS opposes Sec. E.335, which is no longer necessary due to Sec. E.335.1.

Sec. F.15 AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – Notwithstanding AHS’ objections to the House’s changes to Gov Rec, if this appropriation were to proceed, it would be more efficient to grant the funds directly to VSAC for it to administer directly with eligible employees of the DAs and SSAs.

*****Remaining observations relative to H.494*****

- \$9.225M SFY23 BAA Gov. Rec. appropriation for a psychiatric inpatient facility for youths; the BAA Conference Committee stripped the appropriation from the BAA to be addressed as part of the SFY24 budget. The House’s version of the Big Bill does not include any one-time funds for this purpose contingent on availability of the feasibility report. In its current form, H.494 will prevent AHS from moving forward in addressing critical mental health services capacity for Vermonters once the report is issued.
- AHS opposes the removal of the Governor’s proposed childcare initiative in lieu of the legislature’s evolving alternative. Particularly, the removal of five (5) CDD positions and one (1) Administrative position will hobble the implementation of any program changes.
- AHS opposes the homelessness amendment that was proposed and adopted from the House Floor. Generally, AHS would need to analyze what of these funds we could distribute, what resources would be required in terms of additional staffing and support, and it is not clear what would be feasible overall. Further, limiting additional supports of this broad nature to this specific population will slow down the flow of funds to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- AHS opposes the significant reduction to the Gov Rec FEMA High Risk reserve appropriation.