



## **S. 151 An act relating to pay parity and transparency in health care**

### **Senate Health and Welfare Committee**

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**February 23, 2024**

#### **§ 1107. CONSENT TO PREVENTATIVE SERVICES BY MINORS ([18 V.S.A. § 1107](#))**

Section 7 of this bill is an important measure that would allow physicians to provide sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention to young people 12+ without parental consent. Under current Vermont law, physicians can already treat young people diagnosed with an STI, but they cannot discuss or prescribe preventative care. This is a commonsense provision to ensure the health and safety of young Vermonters and to allow physicians to provide comprehensive care to their patients. STI prevention is so much more than just vaccines. In a world in which anyone can access any information (and misinformation) at the click of a button, it is critical that our young people receive medically accurate, individualized prevention resources from their trusted provider.

Vermont has some of the lowest rates of STIs in the country and allowing for the full spectrum of best practice care will help us maintain these successfully low transmission rates. As we emerge from the pandemic, it is noteworthy that STI rates are on the rise across the country, including here in New England where a drug resistant strain of gonorrhea was recently detected.<sup>1</sup>

All young people deserve direct access to safe, confidential health care, including STI prevention. Decades of public health research demonstrates that young people are capable of consenting to this type of care and are more likely to access necessary care without delay if they can do so confidentially. Parental involvement requirements unnecessarily burden access to care and lead to delays – delays that can put young people at risk.

While most teenagers do involve their parents in health care decisions, not all young people live in safe and supportive environments. Parental consent mandates can put already-vulnerable youth at particular risk, including the risk of physical or sexual abuse. Opponents of this bill are trying to spin it into something it is not – and in doing so are ignoring years of public health research and the realities of young people's lives. We all want young Vermonters to live safe, healthy, and full lives with access to the care they need, without fear or shame. S. 151 will help us achieve those goals.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/news/departement-of-public-health-announces-first-cases-of-concerning-gonorrhea-strain>