

Dear Chair Houghton and Chair Lyons,

We are writing as the Co-Chairs of the [Health Equity Advisory Commission](#) (HEAC), which was created by Act 33 in 2021.

We have learned through Chief of Operations Sean Brown (copied here) that the Agency of Administration is seeking written acknowledgement from each of your committees that you intend to locate the new Office of Health Equity (OHE) in the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). Sitting the OHE in VDH is consistent with recommendations made by the HEAC and presented in its [Annual Report](#) (January 2, 2024). Kirsten Murphy also presented this report and its recommendations to the House Committee on Health Care on February 8, 2024. We would welcome an opportunity to make a similar presentation to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, as time permits.

### Background

Sec. E.100.1 (a) of Act 78 (2023) directed the HEAC to submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and on Health Care and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Government Operations, and on Health and Welfare regarding the appropriate state entity for the Office of Health Equity to be attached to for administrative purposes. That reported was required to:

1. Identify various state entities to which the Office could be attached for administrative purposes in order to best position the Office to align with, coordinate with, and complement the State's health equity efforts.
2. Examine the potential benefits and drawbacks of the Office being attached to each of the entities identified.
3. Include a recommendation on how to administer community grants related to health equity.

Sec. E.100.2 (a) of Act 78 (2023) allocates \$250,000 to fund two positions in the Office of Health Equity. There is a stipulation that these funds may only be expended, and the positions may only be filled, once the recommendation required by Sec. E.100.1 regarding the permanent administrative location for the Office of Health Equity is provided.

### Conclusion

We respectfully request that your committees approve the HEAC recommendation for setting up the OHE in the Vermont Department of Health. To enable us to access the appropriated funds, we ask that you notify AOA of your decision.

We are poised to begin advertising to fill the position of Director for the OHE and moving this work forward with the urgency that it deserves.

If we can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Yours Sincerely,

Kirsten Murphy and Rev. Mark Hughes

Co-Chairs, Health Equity Advisory Commission

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Kirsten Murphy

Executive Director, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Rev. Mark Hughes

Executive Director, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance