

1 H.46

2 An act relating to the Rare Disease Advisory Council

3 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

4 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

5 The General Assembly finds that:

6 (1) lack of awareness contributes to common and harmful obstacles that
7 rare disease patients face, such as delays in diagnosis, misdiagnosis, lack of
8 treatment options, high out-of-pocket costs, and limited access to medical
9 specialists; and

10 (2) with the support of the National Organization for Rare Disorders,
11 various patient organizations, and stakeholders in the rare disease community,
12 rare disease advisory councils are enabling states to strategically identify and
13 address barriers that prevent individuals living with rare disease from
14 accessing adequate and effective treatment and care for their condition.

15 Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. chapter 19 is added to read:

16 CHAPTER 19. RARE DISEASES

17 § 981. RARE DISEASE ADVISORY COUNCIL

18 (a) Creation. There is created the Rare Disease Advisory Council within
19 the Department of Health to provide guidance and recommendations to the
20 public, General Assembly, and other government agencies and departments, as
21 necessary, regarding the needs of individuals living with rare diseases in
22 Vermont.

1 (b) Membership.

2 (1) The Advisory Council shall be composed of the following members:

3 (A) two individuals living with a rare disease, at least one of whom is
4 an older Vermonter, appointed by the Commissioner of Health;

5 (B) a parent or guardian of a person living with a rare disease,
6 appointed by the Commissioner of Health;

7 (C) the Commissioner of Health or designee;

8 (D) the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living
9 or designee;

10 (E) a representative of the Health Equity Advisory Commission
11 established pursuant to section 252 of this title;

12 (F) an academic researcher who conducts rare disease research,
13 appointed by the Commissioner of Health;

14 (G) a physician practicing in Vermont with experience treating a rare
15 disease, appointed by the Vermont Medical Society;

16 (H) a nurse practicing in Vermont with experience treating a rare
17 disease, appointed by the Vermont chapter of the American Nurses

18 Association;

19 (I) a pharmacist practicing in Vermont, appointed by the Vermont
20 Pharmacists Association;

1 (J) a geneticist or genetic counselor, appointed by the Commissioner
2 of Health; and

3 (K) any other persons deemed necessary by the Commissioner of
4 Health.

5 (2) Members of the Advisory Council shall be appointed for staggered
6 five-year terms. Any midterm vacancy shall be filled by the appointing
7 authority for the remainder of the unexpired term. Terms shall begin on
8 January 1 of the year of appointment and conclude on December 31 of the last
9 year of the member's term. Members of the Advisory Council may serve
10 multiple terms, either consecutively or intermittently.

11 (3) The Advisory Council may collaborate with any other relevant
12 stakeholders it deems appropriate, including the National Organization for
13 Rare Disorders.

14 (c) Powers and duties. The Advisory Council may conduct the following
15 activities for the benefit of individuals impacted by rare diseases in Vermont:

16 (1) convene public hearings and solicit comments from individuals
17 impacted by rare diseases to assist the Advisory Council with creating a needs
18 assessment identifying gaps in services for individuals with a rare disease in
19 Vermont and the needs of their caregivers and providers;

1 (2) provide testimony and comments on pending legislation and rules
2 that impact Vermont's rare disease community before the General Assembly
3 and other State agencies;

4 (3) in consultation with experts on rare diseases, develop and provide
5 policy recommendations that:

6 (A) identify conditions for the Department of Health to consider as
7 part of appropriate screening guidance and recommendations; and

8 (B) support timely patient access to diagnostic services and treatment
9 and enhance quality of services provided by rare disease specialists; and

10 (4) any other activities identified by a majority of the Advisory Council.

11 (d) Assistance. The Advisory Council shall have the administrative,
12 technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Health. The Department
13 shall maintain a web page on its website that contains notices of upcoming
14 meetings, meeting minutes, public comments, and reports.

15 (e) Report. As needed, the Advisory Council may submit any
16 recommendations for legislative action to the House Committees on Health
17 Care and on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and
18 Welfare.

19 (f) Meetings.

20 (1) The Commissioner of Health or designee shall call the first meeting
21 of the Advisory Council.

1 (2) Annually, the Advisory Council shall elect a member to serve as the
2 Chair.

3 (3) The Advisory Council shall meet quarterly. Meetings may be held
4 in person or remotely on an electronic platform in accordance with the
5 Vermont Open Meeting Law set forth in 1 V.S.A. §§ 310–314.

6 (4) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

7 (g) Compensation and reimbursement. The members of the Advisory
8 Council not otherwise compensated for their participation shall be entitled to
9 per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under
10 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than four meetings annually.

11 Sec. 3. LONG COVID RESOURCES FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS
12 AND PATIENTS

13 (a) On or before January 1, 2027, the Department of Health shall
14 collaborate with the University of Vermont Medical Center, the Vermont
15 Medical Society, and patients with lived experience of long COVID to:

16 (1) identify existing evidence-informed standards, best practices, and
17 training for primary care providers regarding long COVID and distribute these
18 resources through the Department’s website and to primary care providers; and

19 (2) in collaboration with the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and
20 Independent Living, identify support services or other resources for long
21 COVID that include a range of peer and community-based programs, such as

1 long COVID support groups through the University of Vermont Medical
2 Center, the Vermont Center for Independent Living, or another entity, and
3 strategies to support patients who are homebound or at risk of becoming
4 homebound.

5 (b) On or before February 1, 2027, the Department of Health, in
6 collaboration with the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent
7 Living, shall present recommendations to the House Committee on Human
8 Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on providing long-
9 term disability supports to individuals experiencing long COVID.

10 (c) As used in this section, “long COVID” means postacute sequelae of
11 SARS-CoV-2 infection.

12 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

13 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.