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H.227

Introduced by Representatives Bos-Lun of Westminster, Austin of Colchester,
Bishop of Colchester, Burt of Cabot, Campbell of St.
Johnsbury, Carris-Duncan of Whitingham, Chapin of East
Montpelier, Christie of Hartford, Cina of Burlington, Coffin of
Cavendish, Cordes of Bristol, Dodge of Essex, Donahue of
Northfield, Eastes of Guilford, Headrick of Burlington, Hooper
of Burlington, Kleppner of Burlington, Lipsky of Stowe, Logan
of Burlington, McCann of Montpelier, McGill of Bridport,
Morrow of Weston, Mrowicki of Putney, Olson of Starksboro,
Pezzo of Colchester, Pouech of Hinesburg, and Surprenant of
Barnard

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Health; mental health; crisis diversion; peer respite facility

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish a
residential peer respite facility that provides support and services to individuals
experiencing a mental health crisis.

An act relating to establishing a residential peer respite facility in southern
Vermont

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

2 Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

3 It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

4 (1) by increasing from four to six the number of psychiatric residential
5 beds that the Department of Mental Health oversees or contracts for statewide,
6 in addition to those currently available in northern and central Vermont, a
7 greater number of individuals in crisis will be successfully diverted from
8 inpatient psychiatric settings;

9 (2) by providing adequate residential alternatives to hospitalization for
10 individuals in mental health crisis, Vermonters will have greater access to
11 residential support and various therapeutic options during mental health crisis;

12 (3) by expanding peer-supported programming, individuals in mental
13 health crisis seeking an alternative to hospitalization receive effective,
14 compassionate, and affordable care;

15 (4) the State and those individuals seeking support during a mental
16 health crisis may avoid incurring expensive hospitalization costs; and

17 (5) by providing more residential beds for short- to medium-term stays,
18 individuals in mental health crisis will have fewer long-term stays in Vermont
19 hospital emergency departments.

1 Sec. 2. RESIDENTIAL PEER RESPITE FACILITY

2 (a) The Department of Mental Health shall issue a request for proposals to
3 establish a two-bed residential peer respite facility in southern Vermont based
4 on an existing model that provides supports and services to individuals
5 experiencing a mental health crisis.

6 (b) A successful applicant shall ensure that:

7 (1) at least one bed in the facility may be reserved for stays of up to four
8 weeks; and

9 (2) the remaining bed is reserved for short-term residential stays of up to
10 two weeks.

11 (c) On or before January 1, 2026, the Department shall contract with an
12 eligible applicant to establish and operate a residential peer respite facility in
13 accordance with this section.

14 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION; RESIDENTIAL PEER RESPITE FACILITY

15 In fiscal year 2026, \$515,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
16 the Department of Mental Health for the purpose of contracting with an entity
17 to establish and operate a residential peer respite facility pursuant to Sec. 2
18 (residential peer respite facility) of this act.

19 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.