

1 S.27

2 An act relating to medical debt relief and excluding medical debt from  
3 credit reports

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

5 Sec. 1. STATE TREASURER; MEDICAL DEBT RELIEF;

6 APPROPRIATION

7 (a) The sum of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated to the State Treasurer from  
8 the General Fund in fiscal year 2026 for the purpose of contracting with a  
9 nonprofit entity to acquire and repay certain medical debts incurred by  
10 Vermont residents as set forth in this section.

11 (b) The State Treasurer shall ensure that the entity with which the Treasurer  
12 contracts under this section will:

13 (1) purchase the medical debt of eligible debtors from health care  
14 providers at fair market value;

15 (2) abolish the debt with no cost or tax consequences for the debtor;

16 (3) coordinate with the health care provider or collections agency to  
17 ensure that any adverse information resulting from the medical debt is removed  
18 from the debtor's consumer credit report following the contractor's purchase  
19 and abolition of the debt; and

20 (4) notify each individual whose medical debt was abolished pursuant to  
21 this section:

1           (A) the amount of the individual's medical debt that was abolished  
2           and the name of the health care provider or providers from whom the entity  
3           purchased the individual's debt;

4           (B) the estimated percentage of the federal poverty level that  
5           corresponds to the individual's household income; and

6           (C) that financial assistance policies are available at all Vermont  
7           hospitals in accordance with 18 V.S.A. § 9482, including the following  
8           minimum discounts:

9                   (i) a 100 percent discount for individuals with household income  
10           at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level; and

11                   (ii) at least a 40 percent discount for individuals with household  
12           income between 250 and 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

13           (c) In order to be eligible for repayment of medical debt under this section,  
14           the following conditions must be met:

15                   (1) the debtor shall be a Vermont resident who either has a household  
16           income that is at or below 400 percent of the federal poverty level for the  
17           applicable household size or who owes medical debt in an amount that is five  
18           percent or more of the debtor's household income; and

19                   (2) the debtor's patient account still maintains an outstanding balance  
20           even after the health care provider has completed its routine efforts to collect  
21           the amounts due.

1 Sec. 2. [Deleted.]

2 Sec. 3. 1 V.S.A. § 151 is added to read:

3 § 151. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

4 “Behavioral health” means any behavioral condition bearing on health,  
5 including stress-linked physical symptoms, patient activation, and health  
6 behaviors that can be addressed through support, counseling, change  
7 techniques, coaching, and other interventions. As used in the Vermont Statutes  
8 Annotated, the term does not include mental health conditions or substance use  
9 disorders. The General Assembly recognizes that using the term “behavioral  
10 health” to describe mental health conditions or substance use disorders has a  
11 stigmatizing impact, which may deter individuals from seeking health care for  
12 those conditions, but also recognizes that some jurisdictions interpret the term  
13 to incorporate those conditions and that therefore it may be necessary under  
14 limited circumstances to include the term in the definition of health care  
15 services for the sole reason of avoiding any question about the intended scope  
16 of a specific statute.

17 Sec. 4. 9 V.S.A. § 2466d is added to read:

18 § 2466d. REPORTING OF MEDICAL DEBT INFORMATION

19 PROHIBITED

20 (a) A credit reporting agency shall not report or maintain in the file on a  
21 consumer information relating to a medical debt.

1       **(b) As used in this section:**

2               **(1) “Health care services” means all supplies, care, and services of a**  
3       **medical, dental, behavioral health, mental health, substance use disorder**  
4       **treatment, surgical, psychiatric, therapeutic, diagnostic, preventative,**  
5       **rehabilitative, or supportive nature, including medication.**

6               **(2) “Medical debt” means debt arising from health care services,**  
7       **including dental services, or from health care goods, including products,**  
8       **devices, durable medical equipment, and prescription drugs. “Medical debt”**  
9       **does not include debt arising from services provided by a veterinarian; debt**  
10       **charged to a credit card unless the credit card is issued under an open-end or**  
11       **closed-end credit plan offered solely for the payment of health care services;**  
12       **debt charged to a home equity or general-purpose line of credit; or secured**  
13       **debt.**

14       Sec. 5. 9 V.S.A. § 2480b is amended to read:

15       § 2480b. DISCLOSURES TO CONSUMERS

16                               \* \* \*

17               (c) Any time a credit reporting agency is required to make a written  
18       disclosure to consumers pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1681g, it shall disclose, in at  
19       least 12-point type, and in bold type as indicated, the following notice:

20       “NOTICE TO VERMONT CONSUMERS

21                               \* \* \*

\* \* \*

(H) where the request for a credit report is by an organization that is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code for the purpose of determining eligibility for the abolition of medical debt.

\* \* \*

## § 2480g. EXEMPTIONS

\* \* \*

VT LEG #383408 v.1

1       Sec. 7. 18 V.S.A. chapter 221, subchapter 10 is amended to read:

2               Subchapter 10. Patient Financial Assistance and Medical Debt

3                               \* \* \*

4       § 9485. PROHIBITION ON SALE OR REPORTING OF MEDICAL DEBT

5               (a)(1) No large health care facility shall sell its medical debt except as  
6       provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection.

7               (2) A large health care facility may sell or otherwise transfer its medical  
8       debt to an organization that is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of  
9       the Internal Revenue Code for the specific purpose of the tax-exempt  
10       organization abolishing the medical debt of one or more patients by  
11       cancellation of the indebtedness.

12               (b) No large health care facility or medical debt collector shall report or  
13       otherwise furnish any portion of a medical debt to a credit reporting agency.

14                               \* \* \*

15       Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

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