

House Calendar

Friday, April 11, 2025

94th DAY OF THE BIENNIAL SESSION

House Convenes at 9:30 A.M.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACTION CALENDAR

Third Reading

H. 454

An act relating to transforming Vermont’s education governance, quality, and finance systems

Amendment to be offered by Rep. Greer of Bennington to H. 454

That the bill be amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 2, 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1, in subdivision (j)(1)(A)(viii), following “all grade levels from kindergarten through grade 12” by adding “, including use of a supervisory union structure where necessary to maintain existing tuition structures”

Second: By adding a new section to be Sec. 27a to read as follows:

Sec. 27a. TUITION PAYMENT; SCHOOL OPERATION; INTENT

(a) All governance transitions contemplated pursuant to this act shall preserve the ability of a district that, as of the effective date of this section, provides for the education of all resident students in one or more grades by paying tuition on the students’ behalf, to continue to provide education by paying tuition on behalf of all students in the grade or grades if it chooses to do so and shall not result in the consolidation of any district into a merged entity with a dissimilar operating or tuitioning structure.

(b) Nothing in this act shall be construed to restrict or repeal, or to authorize, encourage, or contemplate the restriction or repeal of, the ability of a school district that, as of the effective date of this section, provides for the education of all resident students in one or more grades:

(1) by paying tuition on the students’ behalf, to continue to provide education by paying tuition on behalf of all students in the grade or grades; or

(2) by operating a school offering the grade or grades, to continue to provide education by operating a school for all students in the grade or grades.

Third: In Sec. 95, effective dates, by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (b) to read as follows:

(b) The following sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025:

(1) Sec. 3 (scale; intent);

- (2) Sec. 6 (SBE rules; report);
- (3) Sec. 7 (school size; intent);
- (4) Sec. 8 (school closure);
- (5) Sec. 11 (16 V.S.A. § 3443);
- (6) Sec. 12 (School Construction Advisory Board sunset);
- (7) Sec. 18 (16 V.S.A. § 828);
- (8) Sec. 19 (tuition transition);
- (9) Sec. 20 (statewide cohesion; intent);
- (10) Sec. 21 (AOE report; school calendar; graduation requirements);
- (11) Sec. 22 (State-level governance; intent);
- (12) Sec. 23 (16 V.S.A. § 161);
- (13) Sec. 24 (SBE appointments transition);
- (14) Sec. 25 (16 V.S.A. § 162);
- (15) Sec. 26 (SBE rule review; appropriation);
- (16) Sec. 27a (tuition payment; school operation; intent);
- (17) Sec. 31 (special education report);
- (18) Sec. 32 (AOE special education strategic plan);
- (19) Sec. 33 (AOE position); and
- (20) Sec. 93 (PVR hearing officer pay).

Amendment to be offered by Reps. Toof of St. Albans Town and Houghton of Essex Junction to H. 454

That the bill be amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 2, 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1, by striking out subdivision (b)(2) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (b)(2) to read as follows:

(2) Nonvoting members. The following nine members shall be nonvoting members of the Commission who shall be appointed on or before July 15, 2025:

(A) Nonlegislative members. There shall be five nonlegislative, nonvoting members, all of whom shall have extensive experience working within the Vermont public education system. Appointing authorities shall

coordinate to ensure that, to the extent possible, each of the five nonvoting members represents a different geographic region of the State.

(i) Two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House, one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent of a supervisory union with multiple member school districts and one of whom shall be either a retired or former Vermont school business manager or a retired or former school board member.

(ii) Two members, appointed by the Committee on Committees, one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent and one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont school business manager.

(iii) One member, appointed by the Governor, who shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent.

(B) Legislative members. There shall be four legislative, nonvoting members.

(i) Two current members of the House of Representatives, not all from the same political party or same school district, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House.

(ii) Two current members of the Senate, not all from the same political party or same school district, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees.

Second: In Sec. 2, 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1, in subsection (j), following “to be composed of the” by striking out the word “five” and inserting in lieu thereof the word “nine”

Third: By adding a new reader assistance heading and section to be Sec. 2b to read as follows:

* * * School District Voting Ward Task Force * * *

Sec. 2a. SCHOOL DISTRICT VOTING WARD TASK FORCE; REPORT;

MAPS

(a) Creation. There is created the School District Voting Ward Task Force to create voting district wards within the new school districts contemplated by this act, to ensure school board membership is apportioned in such a manner as to achieve substantially equal weighting of the votes of all voters in the choice of school board members.

(b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following members who shall have substantial understanding of Vermont geography, trade, travel, social interaction, and Vermont’s public education system:

- (1) the Secretary of State or designee, who shall be the chair;
- (2) three members, who shall be appointed by the Vermont Municipal Clerk Treasurer Association;
- (3) two members, appointed by the Vermont School Boards Association;
and
- (4) the Director of the Vermont Center for Geographic Information or designee.

(c) Powers and duties. On or before October 15, 2025, the Task Force shall consult with the school district boundary subcommittee created in Sec. 2 of this act to gain an understanding of the status of the work of the subcommittee and to determine whether the subcommittee has one or more boundary proposals ready for the Task Force to begin the work of creating voting wards. Using the boundary proposals of the subcommittee, the Task Force shall, following the principles of apportionment followed by the legislative apportionment board, make recommendations to the General Assembly to achieve voting districts within each school district that are compact, contiguous, and drawn to achieve substantially equal weighting of votes and that meet the requirements of applicable State and federal law. If at any time during the work of the Task Force the General Assembly enacts new school district boundaries, or it appears clear the General Assembly is focused on only one proposal, the Task Force shall focus its work and recommendations to align with the work of the General Assembly. The Task Force's recommendations shall include:

- (1) the optimal number of school board members per school board to maximize public representation and democratic input while maintaining effective school board size; and
- (2) boundaries for school district voting wards within each school district, with alternative options if necessary, including detailed maps clearly and unambiguously delineating ward boundaries that respect current municipal boundary lines.

(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Secretary of State's office and the technical assistance of the Agency of Digital Services, Vermont Center for Geographic Information. The Task Force may contract for such expert services as may be necessary to carry out its duties.

(e) Meetings.

- (1) The Secretary of State shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before July 15, 2025.

(2) The Secretary of State shall be the chair.

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

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on June 30, 2026.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Secretary of State's office.

Fourth: By adding a new section to be Sec. 61b to read as follows:

Sec. 61b. PROPERTY TAX CLASSIFICATIONS IMPLEMENTATION
REPORT

The Commissioner of Taxes shall study the implementation of new property tax classifications under this act and identify any further actions required by the Department of Taxes, Vermont municipalities, and the General Assembly to successfully implement the new tax classification system on the timeline established by this act. The issues considered by the Commissioner shall include any needed changes to existing forms, whether new forms or taxpayer filings are needed, and how the Department could identify parcels with dwelling units that do not have an affiliated homestead declaration or landlord certificate on file. On or before December 15, 2026, the Commissioner of Taxes shall submit a study report detailing the Commissioner's findings under this section to the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Committee on Finance.

Fifth: In Sec. 95, effective dates, by striking out subsection (a) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (a) to read as follows:

(a) This section and the following sections shall take effect on passage:

(1) Sec. 1 (findings; intent; plan);

(2) Sec. 2 (Commission on the Future of Public Education);

(3) Sec. 2a (School District Voting Ward Task Force);

(4) Sec. 29 (16 V.S.A. § 4011(f));

(5) Sec. 30 (adult education funding report);

(6) Sec. 44 (transportation reimbursement guidelines);

(7) Sec. 45 (inflationary measures; prekindergarten; reports);

(8) Sec. 53 (homestead declaration sample form);

(9) Sec. 61a (tax classification data; transition);

- (10) Sec. 61b (property tax classifications implementation report)
- (11) Sec. 63 (RAD transition; annual progress report);
- (12) Sec. 64 (RAD stakeholder working group);
- (13) Sec. 91 (correction of inadvertently removed language);
- (14) Sec. 92 (minimum debt for tax sales); and
- (15) Sec. 94 (property tax credit late fee).

S. 3

An act relating to the transfer of property to a trust

Favorable with Amendment

H. 293

An act relating to health equity data reporting and registry disclosure requirements

Rep. Eastes of Guilford, for the Committee on Human Services, recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Health Equity Data Reporting * * *

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 253 is amended to read:

§ 253. DATA RESPONSIVE TO HEALTH EQUITY INQUIRIES

* * *

(b)(1) The Department of Health shall systematically analyze such health equity data using the smallest appropriate units of analysis feasible to detect racial and ethnic disparities, as well as disparities along the lines of primary language, sex, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status, and report the results of such analysis on the Department's website periodically, but not less than biannually. The Department's analysis shall be used to measure over time the impact of actions taken to reduce health disparities in Vermont. The data informing the Department's analysis shall be made available to the public in accordance with State and federal law.

(2) ~~Annually~~ Every three years beginning in 2028, on or before January 15, the Department shall submit a report containing the results of the analysis conducted pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and to the House Committees on Health Care and on Human Services.

* * * Cancer Registry Disclosure Requirements * * *

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 155 is amended to read:

§ 155. DISCLOSURE

* * *

(b) The Commissioner may furnish confidential information to the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, other states' cancer registries, federal cancer control agencies, or health researchers in order to collaborate in a national cancer registry or to collaborate in cancer control and prevention research studies. However, before releasing confidential information, the Commissioner shall first obtain from such state registries, agencies, or researchers ~~an agreement in writing to keep~~ written assurances acceptable to the Commissioner that the identifying information shall be kept confidential and privileged as required by law. In the case of researchers, the Commissioner shall also first obtain written evidence of the approval of ~~their academic committee for the protection of human subjects established in accordance with 45 C.F.R. part 46~~ an institutional review board or privacy board in accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (B).

* * * Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Registry Disclosure Requirements * * *

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 174 is amended to read:

§ 174. CONFIDENTIALITY

(a)(1) All identifying information regarding an individual patient or health care provider is exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential.

(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Commissioner may enter into data sharing and protection agreements with researchers or state, regional, or national amyotrophic lateral sclerosis registries for bidirectional data exchange, provided access under such agreements is consistent with the privacy, security, and disclosure protections in this chapter. In the case of researchers, the Commissioner shall also first obtain written evidence of the approval of ~~their academic committee for the protection of human subjects established in accordance with 45 C.F.R. Part 46~~ an institutional review board or privacy board in accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (B). The Commissioner shall disclose the minimum information necessary to accomplish a specified research purpose.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Committee Vote: 11-0-0)

NOTICE CALENDAR
Favorable with Amendment

S. 27

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

Rep. Page of Newport City, for the Committee on Health Care, recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. STATE TREASURER; MEDICAL DEBT RELIEF;

APPROPRIATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sec. 2. 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 83, Sec. 53(b)(5)(B), as amended by 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. C.102 and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. E.1000, is further amended to read:

(B) ~~\$20,000,000~~ \$19,000,000 shall be appropriated to the State Treasurer's Office and used for redeeming State of Vermont general obligation bonds prior to maturity.

Sec. 3. 9 V.S.A. § 2466d is added to read:

§ 2466d. REPORTING OF MEDICAL DEBT INFORMATION

PROHIBITED

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

(b) As used in this section:

(1) "Health care services" means services for the diagnosis, prevention, treatment, cure, or relief of a physical, dental, behavioral, or mental health condition or substance use disorder, including counseling, procedures, products, devices, and medications.

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

Sec. 4. 9 V.S.A. § 2480b is amended to read:

§ 2480b. DISCLOSURES TO CONSUMERS

* * *

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

“NOTICE TO VERMONT CONSUMERS

* * *

(2) Under Vermont law, no one may access your credit report without your permission except under the following limited circumstances:

* * *

(F) where the request for a credit report is related to a credit transaction entered into prior to January 1, 1993; or

(G) where the request for a credit report is by the Vermont Department of Taxes and is used for the purpose of collecting or investigating delinquent taxes; or

(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.

* * *

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

§ 2480g. EXEMPTIONS

* * *

(e) The provisions of section 2480e of this title shall not apply to an organization that is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code when determining eligibility for the abolition of medical debt; provided, however, that the exemption from the provisions of

section 2480e of this title shall not apply to a tax-exempt organization that is a large health care facility, as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9481.

Sec. 6. 18 V.S.A. chapter 221, subchapter 10 is amended to read:

Subchapter 10. Patient Financial Assistance and Medical Debt

* * *

§ 9485. PROHIBITION ON SALE OR REPORTING OF MEDICAL DEBT

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

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

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

* * *

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Committee vote: 11-0-0)

Rep. Nigro of Bennington, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Health Care.

(Committee Vote: 10-0-1)

Senate Proposal of Amendment

H. 80

An act relating to the Office of the Health Care Advocate

The Senate proposes to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 8 V.S.A. § 4062 is amended to read:

§ 4062. FILING AND APPROVAL OF POLICY FORMS AND PREMIUMS

* * *

(c)(1) The Board shall provide information to the public on the Board's website about the public availability of the filings and summaries required under this section.

* * *

(3)(A) In addition to the public comment provisions set forth in this subsection (c), the Office of the Health Care Advocate established in 18 V.S.A. chapter 229, acting on behalf of health insurance consumers in this State, may, within 30 calendar days after the Board receives an insurer's rate request pursuant to this section, submit to the Board, in writing, ~~suggested questions regarding with a substantial relationship to the rate filing for and review criteria that the Board to provide to~~ shall ask the insurer, either directly or through its contracting actuary, if any.

(B) The Office of the Health Care Advocate may also submit to the Board written comments on an insurer's rate request. The Board shall post the comments on its website and shall consider the comments prior to issuing its decision.

~~(d)(1) No later than 60 calendar days after receiving an insurer's rate request pursuant to this section, the Green Mountain Care Board shall make available to the public the insurer's rate filing, the Department's analysis and opinion of the effect of the proposed rate on the insurer's solvency, and the analysis and opinion of the rate filing by the Board's contracting actuary, if any.~~

~~(2) The Board shall post on its website, after redacting any confidential or proprietary information relating to the insurer or to the insurer's rate filing:~~

~~(A) all questions the Board poses to its contracting actuary, if any, and the actuary's responses to the Board's questions; and~~

~~(B) all questions the Board, the Board's contracting actuary, if any, or the Department poses to the insurer and the insurer's responses to those questions~~ The Green Mountain Care Board shall post on its website or otherwise make available to the public through a file-sharing platform all materials in the record of a rate review proceeding after redacting any information or other material that the Board determines to be confidential or otherwise subject to protection from disclosure by law.

* * *

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 9440(c) is amended to read:

(c) The application process shall be as follows:

* * *

(9)(A) The Office of the Health Care Advocate established under chapter 229 of this title or, in the case of nursing homes, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office established under 33 V.S.A. § 7502, is authorized but not required to participate in any administrative or judicial review of an application under this subchapter and shall be considered an interested party in such proceedings upon filing a notice of intervention with the Board.

(B) ~~Once either office files a notice of intervention pursuant to this subchapter, the Board shall provide that office with the information necessary to participate in the review process, including information about procedures, copies of all written correspondence, and copies of all entries in the application record for all certificate of need proceedings, regardless of whether expedited status has been granted~~ that office shall have the right to receive copies of all materials related to the certificate of need application review and may:

(i) submit written questions to the Board that the Board will ask of the applicant in advance of any hearing held in conjunction with the Board's review of the certificate of need application;

(ii) submit written comments for the Board's consideration; and

(iii) ask questions and provide testimony in any hearing held in conjunction with the Board's review of the certificate of need application.

(C) The Office of the Health Care Advocate and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office shall not further disclose any confidential or proprietary information provided to their respective offices pursuant to this subdivision (9).

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. chapter 229 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 229. OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

* * *

§ 9602. OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE; COMPOSITION

(a) The Office of the Health Care Advocate is established as an independent voice for Vermonters that is dedicated to promoting access to high-quality, affordable health care for all.

(b) The Agency of Human Services shall maintain the Office of the Health Care Advocate by contract with any nonprofit organization.

~~(b)~~(c) The Office shall be administered by one or more directors, one of whom shall be the Chief Health Care Advocate, who shall be an individual with expertise and experience in the fields of health care and advocacy. The Advocate director or directors may employ legal counsel, administrative staff,

and other employees and contractors as needed to carry out the duties of the Office.

§ 9603. DUTIES AND AUTHORITY

(a) The Office of the Health Care Advocate shall:

(1) Assist ~~health insurance consumers~~ Vermonters with health insurance plan selection by providing information, referrals, and assistance to individuals about means of obtaining and paying for health insurance coverage and services. The Office shall accept referrals from the Vermont Health Benefit Exchange and Exchange navigators created pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 18, subchapter 1, to assist ~~consumers~~ individuals experiencing problems related to the Exchange.

(2) Assist ~~health insurance consumers~~ Vermonters to understand their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans.

(3) Provide information to the public, agencies, members of the General Assembly, and others ~~regarding about~~ Vermonters' problems and concerns of regarding health insurance ~~consumers and access to health care~~, as well as recommendations for resolving those problems and concerns.

(4) Identify, investigate, and resolve complaints, questions, and inquiries on behalf of individual Vermonters with respect to issues regarding health insurance ~~consumers or access to health care~~, and assist those ~~consumers~~ Vermonters with filing and ~~pursuit of~~ pursuing complaints and appeals.

(5) Provide ~~information to individuals~~ consumer education to Vermonters regarding their ~~obligations~~ rights and responsibilities under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Pub. L. No. 111-148) State and federal laws, rules, and regulations.

(6) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of federal, State, and local laws, rules, and policies relating to ~~patients and health insurance consumers~~ health insurance and health care, with a special focus on patients' rights and eligibility for State and federal health care programs.

(7) ~~Facilitate~~ Ensure policymakers hear directly from Vermonters by facilitating public comment on health care-related laws, rules, processes, and policies, including policies and actions of health insurers.

(8) Suggest to the Green Mountain Care Board, the Department of Financial Regulation, and other entities in State government policies, procedures, or rules ~~to the Green Mountain Care Board in order to~~ that protect patients' and consumers' and promote the interests of Vermonters in matters related to health insurance and access to health care.

(9) ~~Promote the development of~~ Collaborate with other health care- and health policy-related citizen and consumer organizations to promote affordable and accessible health care for Vermonters.

(10) Ensure that ~~patients and health insurance consumers~~ all Vermonters have timely access to the services provided by the Office.

(11) Submit to the Governor; the House Committees on Health Care, on Ways and Means, and on Appropriations; and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, on Finance, and on Appropriations, on or before January 15 of each year, a report on the activities, performance, and fiscal accounts of the Office during the preceding calendar year.

(b) The Office of the Health Care Advocate may:

(1) ~~Review the health insurance records of a consumer who has provided written consent. Based on the written consent of the consumer or his or her guardian or legal representative, a health insurer shall provide the Office with access to records relating to that consumer. [Repealed.]~~

(2) Pursue administrative, judicial, and other remedies on behalf of any individual ~~health insurance consumer~~ or group of consumers individuals experiencing problems with health insurance or access to health care.

(3) Represent the interests of the people of the State ~~in cases requiring a hearing before of Vermont in matters involving health care and health insurance at the Green Mountain Care Board established in chapter 220 of this title, the Department of Financial Regulation, or other State agencies.~~

(4) Adopt policies and procedures necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter.

(5) Take any other action necessary to fulfill the purposes of this chapter.

(c) The Office of the Health Care Advocate shall be able to speak to Vermonters and on behalf of the interests of Vermonters in health care and ~~health insurance consumers~~ insurance-related matters and to carry out all duties prescribed in this chapter without being subject to any retaliatory action; provided, however, that nothing in this subsection shall limit the authority of the Agency of Human Services to enforce the terms of the contract.

(d) Health care providers and health insurers shall cooperate with the Office of the Health Care Advocate by providing relevant records and information when an individual or the individual's guardian or legal representative has authorized the Office to act on the individual's behalf. A health care provider or health insurer may require the written consent of the

individual or the individual's guardian or legal representative prior to providing the records or information to the Office.

§ 9604. DUTIES OF STATE AGENCIES

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that State agencies shall seek input from the Office of the Health Care Advocate when developing or revising significant matters of State policy affecting health care access and affordability in order to ensure that Vermonters' perspectives are heard and considered through the voice of their independent advocate.

(b) All State agencies shall ~~comply~~ facilitate the Office's meaningful participation in health care policymaking by complying with reasonable requests from the Office of the Health Care Advocate for information and assistance, and access. A request shall be considered reasonable if it relates to the Office's statutory duties and authority.

(1) When appropriate, State agencies shall allow the Office to access confidential or proprietary information that is otherwise exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and to participate in meetings, deliberations, and proceedings in which confidential or proprietary information is discussed; provided, however, that nothing in this section shall require a State agency to provide or disclose information that is prohibited from disclosure by State or federal law or that would cause the provider or discloser to violate any statutory or common law privilege.

(2) The Office shall not further disclose any confidential or proprietary information provided to the Office.

(c) The Agency of Human Services may adopt rules necessary to ensure the cooperation of State agencies under this section.

§ 9605. CONFIDENTIALITY

In the absence of written consent by a complainant or an individual using the services of the Office or by his or her guardian or legal representative or the absence of a court order, the Office of the Health Care Advocate, its employees, and its contractors shall not disclose the identity of the complainant or individual. The Office of the Health Care Advocate shall maintain the confidentiality of information related to individuals using its services in accordance with all applicable State and federal laws, rules, regulations, and policies.

§ 9606. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

(a) The Office of the Health Care Advocate, its employees, and its contractors shall not have any conflict of interest relating to the performance

of their responsibilities under this chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, a conflict of interest exists whenever the Office of the Health Care Advocate, its employees, or its contractors or a person affiliated with the Office, its employees, or its contractors:

(1) has a direct involvement in the licensing, certification, or accreditation of a health care facility, health insurer, or health care provider;

(2) has a direct ownership interest or investment interest in a health care facility, health insurer, or health care provider;

(3) is employed by or participating in the management of a health care facility, health insurer, or health care provider; or

(4) receives or has the right to receive, directly or indirectly, remuneration under a compensation arrangement with a health care facility, health insurer, or health care provider.

(b) The Office shall report any potential conflicts of interest to the Agency of Human Services.

(c) It shall not constitute a conflict of interest per se for an employee or contractor of the Office to serve without compensation on the board of directors of a nonprofit health care entity whose primary regulator is not an agency of the State of Vermont.

* * *

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

CONSENT CALENDAR FOR ACTION

Concurrent Resolutions for Adoption Under Joint Rules 16a - 16d

The following concurrent resolutions have been introduced for approval by the Senate and House and will be adopted automatically unless a Senator or Representative requests floor consideration in that member's chamber before today's adjournment. Requests for floor consideration in either chamber should be communicated to the Senate Secretary's Office or the House Clerk's Office, as applicable. For text of resolutions, see Addendum to House Calendar of April 10, 2025.

H.C.R. 81

House concurrent resolution in memory of former Bakersfield Select Board member Brenda Churchill

H.C.R. 82

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Fair Haven Union High School Slaters State championship bowling team

H.C.R. 83

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2024 Green Mountain Council Class of Eagle Scouts

H.C.R. 84

House concurrent resolution congratulating the Mount Anthony Union High School Patriot wrestling program on winning its 36th consecutive State championship

H.C.R. 85

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 North Country Union High School Falcons' exemplary snowboarding teams

H.C.R. 86

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Montpelier High School Solons Division II girls' Nordic championship ski team

H.C.R. 87

House concurrent resolution congratulating the Montpelier High School Solons boys' basketball program on winning a fifth consecutive Division II championship

H.C.R. 88

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Thetford Academy inductees into the National Technical Honor Society

H.C.R. 89

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Fair Haven Union High School Slaters girls' basketball team on winning a second consecutive Division II championship

H.C.R. 90

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Burlington High School Seahorses Division I championship girls' basketball team

H.C.R. 91

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Burlington High School Seahorses Division I championship boys' basketball team

H.C.R. 92

House concurrent resolution honoring the outstanding achievements of the Federal TRIO Programs in Vermont

H.C.R. 93

House concurrent resolution congratulating Kathleen Lynch of Burlington on being named as the 2025 Vermont Mother of the Year

H.C.R. 94

House concurrent resolution congratulating Tyler Riggs of Fletcher on the Vermont Forest Products Association naming him Vermont's Outstanding Sawmill Operator 2024

For Informational Purposes

NOTICE OF PUBIC HEARING

The Vermont Senate Committee on Government Operations and the Vermont House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs will hold a public hearing on Veteran's Affairs on **Wednesday, April 30, 2025 from 4:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. in Room 11 at the State House.**

H.C.R. REQUEST DEADLINE

All requests for a 2025 House Concurrent Resolution should be submitted to Michael Chernick in the Office of Legislative Counsel by noon on **Friday, April 25, 2025.**

CROSSOVER DATES

The Joint Rules Committee established the following crossover dates:

(1) All **Senate/House** bills must be reported out of the last committee of reference (including the Committees on Appropriations and Finance/Ways and Means, except as provided below in (2) and the exceptions listed below) on or before **Friday, March 14, 2025**, and filed with the Secretary/Clerk so they may be placed on the Calendar for Notice the next legislative day – Committee bills must be voted out of Committee by **Friday, March 14, 2025.**

(2) All **Senate/House** bills referred pursuant to Senate Rule 31 or House Rule 35(a) to the Committees on Appropriations and Finance/Ways and Means must be reported out by the last of those committees on or before **Friday,**

March 21, 2025, and filed with the Secretary/Clerk so they may be placed on the Calendar for Notice the next legislative day.

Exceptions to the foregoing deadlines include the major money bills (the general Appropriations bill (“The Big Bill”), the Transportation Capital bill, the Capital Construction bill, and the Fee/Revenue bills).

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION (H.C.R.) PROCESS

Joint Rules 16a–16d provide the procedure for the General Assembly to adopt concurrent resolutions pursuant to the Consent Calendar. Here are the steps for Representatives to introduce an H.C.R. and to have it ceremonially read during a House session:

1. Meet with Legislative Counselor Michael Chernick regarding your H.C.R. draft request. Come prepared with an idea and any relevant supporting documents.
2. Have a date in mind if you want a ceremonial reading. You should meet with Counselor Chernick at least two weeks prior to the week you want your ceremonial reading to happen.
3. Counselor Chernick will draft your H.C.R., and Resolutions Editor and Coordinator Jill Pralle will edit it. Upon completion of this process, a paper or electronic copy will be released to you. If a paper copy is released to you, a sponsor signout sheet will also be included.
4. Please submit the sponsor list to Counselor Chernick by paper *or* electronically, but not both.
5. The final list of sponsors needs to be submitted to Counselor Chernick not later than 12:00 noon the Thursday of the week prior to the H.C.R.’s appearance on the Consent Calendar.
6. The Office of Legislative Counsel will then send your H.C.R. to the House Clerk’s Office for incorporation into the Consent Calendar and House Calendar Addendum for the following week.
7. The week that your H.C.R. is on the Consent Calendar, any presentation copies that you requested will be mailed or available for pickup on Friday, after the House and Senate adjourn, which is when your H.C.R. is adopted pursuant to Joint Rules.
8. Your H.C.R. can be ceremonially read during a House session once it is adopted. If you would like to schedule a ceremonial reading, contact

Second Assistant Clerk Courtney Reckord to confirm your requested ceremonial reading date.

JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE NOTICES

Grants and Positions that have been submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committee by the Administration, under 32 V.S.A. §5(b)(3)(D):

JFO #3246: 125+ acre land donation valued at \$184,830.00 from Pieter Van Schaik of Cavendish, VT to the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. The acreage will become part of the Lord State Forest. *[Received March 24, 2025]*

JFO #3244: \$2,335,401.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Health from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Funds support continued crisis counseling assistance and training in response to the July 2024 flood event. *[Received February 7, 2025]*

JFO #3245: \$250,000.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Health from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. Funds used to provide trainings for crisis staff and to make improvements to the State's crisis system dispatch platform. *[Received February 7, 2025]*