

House Calendar

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

126th DAY OF THE BIENNIAL SESSION

House Convenes at 10:00 A.M.

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ACTION CALENDAR

Unfinished Business of Monday, May 12, 2025

Third Reading

S. 117

An act relating to rulemaking on safety and health standards and technical corrections on employment practices and unemployment compensation

Favorable with Amendment

H. 46

An act relating to the Rare Disease Advisory Council

Rep. Garofano of Essex, 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:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

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

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

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

CHAPTER 19. RARE DISEASES

§ 981. RARE DISEASE ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

(b) Membership.

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

(A) two individuals living with a rare disease, at least one of whom is an older Vermonter, one appointed by the Speaker of the House and one appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees;

(B) a parent or guardian of a person living with a rare disease, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees;

(C) the Commissioner of Health or designee;

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

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

(F) an academic researcher who conducts rare disease research, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

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

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

(I) a pharmacist practicing in Vermont, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees; and

(J) a geneticist or genetic counselor, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees.

(2) The Advisory Council shall collaborate with any other relevant stakeholders it deems appropriate, including the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

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

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

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

(3) consult with experts on rare diseases to develop policy recommendations that:

(A) identify conditions to recommend to the Newborn Screening Advisory Committee as part of the Vermont Newborn Screening Program; and

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

(4) maintain a web page on the Department of Health's website to serve as a resource for individuals with a rare disease that contains notices of upcoming meetings, meeting minutes, public comments, and previous annual reports; and

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

(d) Assistance. The Advisory Council shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Health.

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

(f) Meetings.

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

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

(3) The Advisory Council shall meet quarterly. Meetings may be held in person or remotely on an electronic platform as determined by the Chair.

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

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

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

(Committee Vote: 10-1-0)

Rep. Bluemle of Burlington, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommends that the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee on Human Services.

(Committee Vote: 9-0-2)

S. 63

An act relating to modifying the regulatory duties of the Green Mountain Care Board

Rep. Critchlow of Colchester, for the Committee on Health Care, recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 7, 18 V.S.A. § 9456, in its entirety and inserting a new Sec. 7 to read as follows:

Sec. 7. 18 V.S.A. § 9456 is amended to read:

§ 9456. BUDGET REVIEW

(a) The Board shall conduct reviews of each hospital's proposed budget based on the information provided pursuant to this subchapter and in accordance with a schedule established by the Board. Notwithstanding any provision of 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to the contrary, the Board's review, establishment, and enforcement of hospital budgets under this section shall not be construed to be a contested case. Any person aggrieved by a final Board action, order, or determination under this section may appeal as set forth in section 9381 of this title.

* * *

(d)(1)(A) Annually, the Board shall establish a budget for each general hospital, as defined in section 1902 of this title, on or before September 15, followed by a written decision by on or before October 1.

(B) Annually, the Board shall establish a budget for each psychiatric hospital, as defined in section 1902 of this title but excluding those conducted, maintained, or operated by the State of Vermont, on or before December 15, followed by a written decision on or before December 31.

(C) Each hospital shall operate within the budget established under this section.

* * *

(h)(1) If a hospital violates a provision of this section, the Board may maintain an action in the Superior Court of the county in which the hospital is located to enjoin, restrain, or prevent such violation.

(2)(A) After notice and an opportunity for hearing, the Board may impose on a person who knowingly violates a provision of this subchapter, or a rule adopted pursuant to this subchapter, a civil administrative penalty of ~~no~~ not more than \$40,000.00, or in the case of a continuing violation, a civil administrative penalty of ~~no~~ not more than \$100,000.00 or one-tenth of one percent of the gross annual revenues of the hospital, whichever is greater. This subdivision shall not apply to violations of subsection (d) of this section caused by exceptional or unforeseen circumstances.

(B)(i) The Board may order a hospital to:

* * *

(ii) Orders issued under this subdivision (2)(B) shall be issued after notice and an opportunity to be heard, except where the Board finds that a hospital's financial or other emergency circumstances pose an immediate threat of harm to the public or to the financial condition of the hospital. Where there is an immediate threat, the Board may issue orders under this subdivision (2)(B) without written or oral notice to the hospital. Where an order is issued without notice, the hospital shall be notified of the right to a hearing at the time the order is issued. The hearing shall be held within 30 days after receipt of the hospital's request for a hearing, and a decision shall be issued within 30 days after conclusion of the hearing. The Board may increase the time to hold the hearing or to render the decision for good cause shown. ~~Hospitals may appeal any decision in this subsection to Superior Court. Appeal shall be on the record as developed by the Board in the administrative proceeding and the standard of review shall be as provided in 8 V.S.A. § 16.~~

Second: By striking out Sec. 10, effective dates, in its entirety and inserting a new Sec. 10 to read as follows:

Sec. 10. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) In Sec. 5, (18 V.S.A. § 9382), subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2027 and subsections (b)–(g) shall take effect on January 1, 2026.

(b) Secs. 6 (18 V.S.A. § 9454) and 7 (18 V.S.A. § 9456) and this section shall take effect on passage.

(c) The remaining sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Committee vote: 8-3-0)

Rep. Branagan of Georgia, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with the proposal of amendment recommended by the Committee on Health Care.

(Committee Vote: 9-2-0)

Senate Proposal of Amendment to House Proposal of Amendment

S. 50

An act relating to increasing the size of solar net metering projects that qualify for expedited registration

The Senate concurs in the House proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment by adding a new section to be Sec. 1a to read as follows:

**Sec. 1a. NET METERING RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS
OWNERSHIP**

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) shall allow a customer who owns a net metering system that was commissioned between January 1, 2023 and July 1, 2025 to change the customer's decision to retain the attributes once. The customer shall be allowed to transfer the attributes to the utility by submitting a request to the PUC by September 2, 2025.

Action Postponed Until Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Favorable with Amendment

S. 125

An act relating to workers' compensation and collective bargaining rights

Rep. Dodge of Essex, for the Committee on General and Housing, 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. [Deleted.]

Sec. 2. [Deleted.]

Sec. 3. [Deleted.]

Sec. 4. [Deleted.]

*** * * Labor Relations * * ***

Sec. 5. 3 V.S.A. § 1011 is amended to read:

§ 1011. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(8) “Employee,” means any individual employed and compensated on a permanent or limited status basis by the Judiciary Department, including permanent part-time employees and any individual whose employment has ceased as a consequence of, or in connection with, any current labor dispute or because of an unfair labor practice. “Employee” does not include any of the following:

- (A) a Justice, judge, assistant judge, magistrate, or hearing officer;
- (B) the Court Administrator;
- (C) a managerial, ~~supervisory~~, or confidential employee;
- (D) a law clerk, attorney, or administrative assistant or private secretary to a judge, Justice, or Court Administrator;
- (E) an individual employed on a temporary, contractual, seasonal, or on-call basis, including an intern;
- (F) an employee during the initial or extended probationary period;
- (G) the head of a department or division;
- (H) [Repealed.]
- (I) an attorney for the Supreme Court, for the Court Administrator, or for any board or commission created by the Supreme Court;
- (J) an employee paid by the State who is appointed part-time as county clerk pursuant to 4 V.S.A. § 651 or 691;
- (K) an employee who, after hearing by the Board upon petition of any individual, the employer, or a collective bargaining unit, is determined to be in a position that is sufficiently inconsistent with the spirit and intent of this chapter to warrant exclusion.

* * *

Sec. 5a. 3 V.S.A. § 941 is amended to read:

§ 941. UNIT DETERMINATION, CERTIFICATION, AND
REPRESENTATION

* * *

(c)(1) A petition may be filed with the Board, in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Board by an employee or group of employees, or

any individual or employee organization purporting to act on their behalf, alleging by filing a petition or petitions bearing signatures of not less than 30 percent of the employees that they wish to form a bargaining unit and be represented for collective bargaining, ~~or that the individual or employee organization currently certified as the bargaining agent is no longer supported by at least 51 percent of the employees in the bargaining unit~~, or that they are now included in an approved bargaining unit and wish to form a separate bargaining unit under Board criteria for purposes of collective bargaining. The employee, group of employees, individual, or employee organization that files the petition, shall, at the same time that the petition is filed with the Board, provide a copy of the petition to the employer and, if appropriate, the current bargaining agent.

(2) A petition may be filed with the Board, in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Board, by an employee or group of employees, or any individual or employee organization purporting to act on their behalf, alleging by filing a petition or petitions bearing signatures of not less than 50 percent plus one of the employees that the individual or employee organization currently certified as the bargaining agent is no longer supported by a majority of the employees in the bargaining unit. The employee, group of employees, individual, or employee organization that files the petition shall, at the same time that the petition is filed with the Board, provide a copy of the petition to the employer and, if appropriate, the current bargaining agent.

(A)(i) An employer shall, not more than seven business days after receiving a copy of the petition, file any objections to the appropriateness of the proposed bargaining unit and raise any other unit determination issues with the Board and provide a copy of the filing to the employee, group of employees, individual, or employee organization that filed the petition.

* * *

(d) The Board, a Board member, or a person or persons designated by the Board shall investigate the petition and do one of the following:

(1) Determine that the petition has made a sufficient showing of interest pursuant to ~~subdivision~~ subdivisions (c)(1) and (2) of this section.

* * *

~~* * * State Construction Projects * * *~~

Sec. 5b. [Deleted.]

Sec. 5c. 3 V.S.A. § 1021 is amended to read:

§ 1021. UNIT DETERMINATION; CERTIFICATION

(a) The Board shall determine issues of unit determination, certification, decertification, and representation in accordance with this chapter and the provisions of section 941 of this title. The Board shall decide the appropriate unit for collective bargaining in each case and the employees to be included in that unit to assure the employees the fullest freedom in exercising the rights guaranteed by this chapter.

* * *

Sec. 5d. 16 V.S.A. § 1992 is amended to read:

§ 1992. REFERENDUM PROCEDURE FOR REPRESENTATION

* * *

(b) Certification of a negotiating unit as exclusive representative shall be valid and not subject to challenge by referendum petition or otherwise for the remainder of the fiscal year in which the certification occurs and for an additional period of 12 months after final adoption of the budget for the succeeding fiscal year and shall continue thereafter until a new referendum is called for. An organization or group of teachers or administrators, or any person purporting to act on their behalf, shall submit a petition bearing signatures of not less than 50 percent plus one of the individuals currently in the bargaining unit alleging that the current exclusive representative of the teachers or administrators is no longer supported by a majority of the teachers or administrators employed by that school board. A copy of the petition shall be provided to the current bargaining agent at the same time as the petition is submitted to the school board.

* * *

Sec. 5e. 21 V.S.A. §§ 1581 and 1584 are amended to read:

§ 1581. PETITIONS FOR ELECTION; FILING, INVESTIGATIONS,
HEARINGS, DETERMINATIONS

(a) A petition may be filed with the Board, in accordance with rules adopted by the Board:

(1) By an employee or group of employees, or any individual or labor organization acting in their behalf, alleging that not less than 30 percent of the employees:

(A) wish to be represented for collective bargaining and that their employer declines to recognize their representative as the representative defined in section 1583 of this title; or

(2)(B) by an employee or group of employees, or any individual or labor organization acting on their behalf, alleging that not less than 50 percent plus one of the employees assert that the individual or labor organization that has been certified, or is being currently recognized by their employer as the bargaining representative, is no longer a representative as defined in section 1583 of this title; or

(2)(3) By by an employer, alleging that one or more individuals or labor organizations have presented to him or her a claim to be recognized as the representative defined in section 1583 of this title.

* * *

§ 1584. PETITIONS AND ELECTION TO RESCIND

REPRESENTATIVE'S AUTHORITY

(a) When ~~30~~ 50 percent plus one or more of the employees in a bargaining unit covered by an agreement between their employer and a labor organization requiring membership in a labor organization as a condition of employment file a petition alleging that they desire that the authority of the labor organization to make such an agreement be rescinded, the Board shall take a secret ballot of the employees in such unit and certify the results thereof, in writing, to the labor organization and to the employer.

(b) No election shall be conducted under this section in a bargaining unit or a subdivision within which in the preceding 12 months a valid election or certification of a representative pursuant to this subchapter has occurred.

Sec. 5f. 21 V.S.A. § 1724 is amended to read:

§ 1724. CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

(a)(1) A petition may be filed with the Board, in accordance with rules adopted by the Board:

(A) By an employee or group of employees, or any individual or employee organization purporting to act on their behalf, alleging that not less than 30 percent of the employees wish to form a bargaining unit and be represented for collective bargaining, ~~or assert that the individual or employee organization currently certified as bargaining agent is no longer supported by at least 51 percent of the employees in the bargaining unit, or that not less than 51 percent of the employees now included in an approved bargaining unit wish to form a separate bargaining unit under Board criteria for purposes of~~

collective bargaining. The employee, group of employees, individual, or employee organization that files the petition shall, at the same time that the petition is filed with the Board, provide a copy of the petition to the employer and, if appropriate, the current bargaining agent.

(B) By the employer alleging that the presently certified bargaining unit is no longer appropriate under Board criteria. The employer shall provide a copy of the petition to the current bargaining agent at the same time that the petition is filed with the Board.

(C) By an employee or group of employees, or any individual or employee organization purporting to act on their behalf, alleging that a majority of the employees in the bargaining unit no longer support the individual or employee organization currently certified as the bargaining agent. The petition shall bear signatures of not less than 50 percent plus one of the employees in the presently certified bargaining unit. The employee, group of employees, individual, or employee organization that files the petition shall, at the same time that the petition is filed with the Board, provide a copy of the petition to the employer and, if appropriate, the current bargaining agent.

(2)(A)(i) An employer shall, not more than seven business days after receiving a copy of the petition, file any objections to the appropriateness of the proposed bargaining unit and raise any other unit determination issues with the Board and provide a copy of the filing to the employee, group of employees, individual, or employee organization that filed the petition.

(ii) A hearing shall be held before the Board pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(B) of this section in the event the employer challenges the appropriateness of the proposed bargaining unit, provided that a hearing shall not be held if the parties stipulate to the composition of the appropriate bargaining unit and resolve any unit determination issues before the hearing.

(iii) The Board may endeavor to informally mediate any dispute regarding the appropriateness of the proposed bargaining unit prior to the hearing.

(B)(i) Within five business days after receiving a copy of the petition, the employer shall file with the Board and the employee or group of employees, or the individual or employee organization purporting to act on their behalf, a list of the names and job titles of the employees in the proposed bargaining unit. To the extent possible, the list of employees shall be in alphabetical order by last name and provided in electronic format.

(ii) An employee or group of employees, or any person purporting to act on their behalf, that is seeking to demonstrate that the current bargaining

agent is no longer supported by ~~at least 51 percent~~ a majority of the employees in the bargaining unit shall not be entitled to obtain a list of the employees in the bargaining unit from the employer pursuant to this subdivision (a)(2)(B), but may obtain a list pursuant to subdivision (e)(3) of this section after the Board has investigated its petition and determined that a secret ballot election shall be conducted.

(iii) The list shall be kept confidential and shall be exempt from copying and inspection under the Public Records Act.

* * *

(b) The Board, a Board member, or a person or persons designated by the Board shall investigate the petition and do one of the following:

(1) Determine that the petition has made a sufficient showing of interest pursuant to ~~subdivision~~ subdivisions (a)(1)(A) and (C) of this section.

(2)(A) If it finds reasonable cause to believe that a question of unit determination or representation exists, the Board shall schedule a hearing to be held before the Board not more than ~~ten~~ 10 business days after the petition was filed with the Board.

* * *

(e)(1) Except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection (h) of this section, in determining the representation of municipal employees in a collective bargaining unit, the Board shall conduct an election by secret ballot of the employees and certify the results to the interested parties and to the employer. The election shall be held not more than 23 business days after the petition is filed with the Board except as otherwise provided pursuant to subdivision (4) of this subsection.

(2) The original ballot shall permit a vote against representation by anyone named on the ballot. No representative will be certified with less than a ~~51 percent affirmative vote~~ majority of all votes cast. If it is asserted that the certified bargaining agent is no longer supported by at least ~~51~~ 50 percent plus one of the employees in the bargaining unit and there is no attempt to seek the election of another employee organization or individual as bargaining representative, there shall be at least ~~51 percent negative vote~~ a majority of all votes cast to decertify the existing bargaining agent.

* * *

Sec. 5g. 21 V.S.A. § 1635 is amended to read:

§ 1635. ELECTION; BARGAINING UNIT

(a) ~~Petitions~~ Certification and decertification petitions and elections shall be conducted pursuant to the procedures provided in 3 V.S.A. §§ 941 and 942, except that only one bargaining unit shall exist for independent direct support providers, and the exclusive representative shall be the exclusive representative for the purpose of grievances.

* * *

Sec. 5h. 33 V.S.A. § 3607 is amended to read:

§ 3607. PETITIONS FOR ELECTION; FILING; INVESTIGATIONS;
HEARINGS; DETERMINATIONS

(a) A petition may be filed with the Board in accordance with rules prescribed by the Board:

(1) By an early care and education provider or group of providers or any individual or labor organization acting on the providers' behalf:

(A) ~~alleging~~ Alleging that not less than 30 percent of the providers in the petitioned bargaining unit wish to be represented for collective bargaining and that the State declines to recognize their representative as the representative defined in this chapter; ~~or~~ or

(B) ~~asserting~~ Asserting that the labor organization that has been certified as the bargaining representative no longer represents a majority of early care and education providers. The petition alleging that the labor organization is no longer supported by a majority of the providers shall bear signatures of not less than 50 percent plus one of the providers in the bargaining unit.

(2) By the State alleging that one or more individuals or labor organizations have presented a claim to be recognized as the exclusive representative defined in this chapter.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to collective bargaining"

(Committee vote: 8-2-1)

Amendment to be offered by Rep. Harrison of Chittenden to the report of the Committee on General and Housing on S. 125

That the report of the Committee on General and Housing be amended by striking out Sec. 6, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 6 and reader assistance heading to read as follows:

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Secs. 1–4, 5a–5h, and this section shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(b) Sec. 5 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Amendment to be offered by Rep. Greer of Bennington to the report of the Committee on General and Housing on S. 125

That the report of the Committee on General and Housing be amended by adding a new reader assistance heading and section to be Sec. 5i to read as follows:

* * * Wages and Medium of Payment * * *

Sec. 5i. 21 V.S.A. § 342 is amended to read:

§ 342. WEEKLY PAYMENT OF WAGES

* * *

(b)(1) An employee who:

(1)(A) voluntarily leaves employment shall be paid on the last regular pay day, or if there is no regular pay day, on the following Friday;

(2)(B) is discharged from employment shall be paid within 72 hours of following discharge; or

(3)(C) is absent from his or her the employee's regular place of employment on the employer's regular scheduled date of wages or salary payment shall be entitled to payment upon demand.

(2) The final payment of wages to an employee who leaves employment, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, shall include payment for any unused accrued vacation leave.

* * *

Senate Proposal of Amendment

H. 41

An act relating to abuse of the dead body of a person

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. 13 V.S.A. § 3761a is added to read:

§ 3761a. ABUSE OF THE DEAD BODY OF A PERSON

(a) No person shall, knowingly without legal authorization, intentionally burn, mutilate, disfigure, dismember, or destroy the dead body of a person.

(b) No person shall violate subsection (a) of this section for the purpose of concealing a crime or avoiding apprehension, prosecution, or conviction of a crime.

(c) No person shall commit sexual conduct upon the dead body of a person.

(d)(1) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section shall be imprisoned not more than five years or fined not more than \$5,000.00, or both.

(2) A person who violates subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall be imprisoned not more than 15 years or fined not more than \$10,000.00, or both.

(e) As used in this section:

(1) "Dead body of a person" does not include the cremated remains of a person.

(2) "Sexual conduct" means any of the following committed against the dead body of a person:

(A) any conduct involving contact between the penis and the vulva, the penis and the penis, the penis and the anus, the mouth and the penis, the mouth and the anus, the vulva and the vulva, or the mouth and the vulva;

(B) any intrusion, however slight, by any part of an individual's body or any object into any part of a dead human body with the intent of arousing, appealing to, or gratifying the lust, passions, or sexual desire of any individual;

(C) any touching of the dead human body with the intent of arousing, appealing to, or gratifying the lust, passions, or sexual desire of any individual;

(D) masturbation; or

(E) bestiality.

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 5211 is amended to read:

§ 5211. UNAUTHORIZED BURIAL OR REMOVAL; PENALTY

A person who buries, entombs, transports, or removes the dead body of a person without a burial-transit permit so to do, or in any other manner or at any other time or place than as specified in such permit, shall be ~~imprisoned not more than five years or fined~~ subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$1,000.00, or both.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

H. 98

An act relating to confirmatory adoptions

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. 15A V.S.A. § 1-114 is added to read:

§ 1-114. CONFIRMATORY ADOPTION FOR CHILDREN BORN
THROUGH ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Assisted reproduction” means a method of causing pregnancy other than sexual intercourse and includes:

- (A) intrauterine, intracervical, or vaginal insemination;
- (B) donation of gametes;
- (C) donation of embryos;
- (D) in vitro fertilization and transfer of embryos; and
- (E) intracytoplasmic sperm injection.

(2) “Donor” means a person who contributes a gamete or gametes or an embryo or embryos to another person for assisted reproduction or gestation, whether or not for consideration. This term does not include:

(A) a person who gives birth to a child conceived by assisted reproduction except as otherwise provided in 15C V.S.A. chapter 8; or

(B) a parent under 15C V.S.A. chapter 7 or an intended parent under 15C V.S.A. chapter 8.

(3) “Marriage” includes civil union and any legal relationship that provides substantially the same rights, benefits, and responsibilities as

marriage and is recognized as valid in the state or jurisdiction in which it was entered.

(4) “Petitioners” means the persons filing a petition for adoption in accordance with this section.

(b) Whenever a child is born as a result of assisted reproduction and the person or persons who did not give birth are a parent pursuant to 15C V.S.A. § 703 or presumed parent pursuant to 15C V.S.A. § 401 and the parents seek to file a petition to confirm parentage through an adoption of the child, the court shall permit the parents to file a petition for adoption in accordance with this section.

(c) A complete petition shall comprise the following:

(1) the petition for adoption signed by all parents;

(2) a copy of the petitioners’ marriage certificate, if petitioners are married;

(3) a declaration signed by the parents explaining the circumstances of the child’s birth through assisted reproduction, attesting to their consent to assisted reproduction, and stating that there are no other persons with a claim to parentage of the child under Title 15C; and

(4) a certified copy of the child’s birth certificate.

(d) A complete petition for adoption, as described in subsection (c) of this section, shall serve as the petitioners’ written consents to adoption and no additional consent or notice shall be required.

(e) If the petitioners conceived through assisted reproduction with donor gametes or donor embryos, the court shall not require notice of the adoption to the donor or consent to the adoption by the donor.

(f) Unless otherwise ordered by the court for good cause shown and supported by written findings of the court demonstrating good cause, for purposes of evaluating and granting a petition for adoption pursuant to this section, the court shall not require:

(1) an in-person hearing or appearance, although the court may require a remote hearing;

(2) an investigation or home study by, a notice to, or the approval of the Department for Children and Families;

(3) a criminal-record check;

(4) verification that the child is not registered with the federal register for missing children or the central register; or

(5) a minimum residency period in the home of the petitioners.

(g) The court shall grant the adoption under this section and issue an adoption decree promptly after the filing of a complete petition and upon finding that:

(1) for marital parents, the parent who gave birth and the spouse were married at the time of the child's birth and the child was born through assisted reproduction; or

(2) for nonmarital parents:

(A) the person who gave birth and the nonmarital parent consented to the assisted reproduction; and

(B) no other person has a claim to parentage pursuant to Title 15C or that any other person with a claim to parentage of the child who is required to be provided notice of, or who must consent to, the adoption has been notified or provided consent to the adoption.

(h) Unless notice has been waived or consent given for the adoption, a copy of the petition and notice of a proceeding under this section shall be served upon any person entitled to notice within 30 days after the petition is filed. The notice shall include the address and telephone number of the court where the petition is pending and a statement that the person served with the notice and petition shall file a written appearance in the proceeding within 20 days after service in order to participate in the proceeding and to receive further notice of the proceeding, including notice of the time and place of any hearing. Service of the notice and petition shall be made in a manner appropriate under the Vermont Rules of Probate Procedure unless the court otherwise directs. Proof of service on each person entitled to receive notice shall be on file with the court before the court acts on the petition.

(i) A petition to adopt a child pursuant to this section shall not be denied on the basis that any of the petitioners' parentage is already presumed or legally recognized in Vermont.

(j) When parentage is presumed or legally recognized pursuant to 15C V.S.A. § 201, the fact that a person did not petition for adoption pursuant to this section shall not be considered as evidence when two or more presumptions conflict, nor in determining the best interests of the child.

Sec. 2. 14 V.S.A. § 2622 is amended to read:

§ 2622. DEFINITIONS

As used in this article:

(1) “Child” means an individual who is under 18 years of age and who is the subject of a petition for guardianship filed pursuant to section 2623 of this title.

(2) “Child in need of guardianship” means:

(A) A child who the parties consent is in need of adult care because of any one of the following:

(i) The child’s custodial parent has a serious or terminal illness.

(ii) A custodial parent’s physical or mental health prevents the parent from providing proper care and supervision for the child.

(iii) The child’s home is no longer habitable as the result of a natural disaster.

(iv) A custodial parent of the child is incarcerated.

(v) A custodial parent of the child is on active military duty.

(vi) A custodial parent of the child is unavailable to care for the child because the parent has been subject to an adverse immigration action.

(vii) The parties have articulated and agreed to another reason that guardianship is in the best interests of the child.

(B) A child who is:

(i) abandoned or abused by the child’s parent;

(ii) without proper parental care, subsistence, education, medical, or other care necessary for the child’s well-being; or

(iii) without or beyond the control of the child’s parent.

(3) “Custodial parent” means a parent who, at the time of the commencement of the guardianship proceeding, has the right and responsibility to provide the routine daily care and control of the child. The rights of the custodial parent may be held solely or shared and may be subject to the court-ordered right of the other parent to have contact with the child. If physical parental rights and responsibilities are shared pursuant to court order, both parents shall be considered “custodial parents” for purposes of this subdivision.

(4) “Nonconsensual guardianship” means a guardianship with respect to which:

(A) a parent is opposed to establishing the guardianship; or

(B) a parent seeks to terminate a guardianship that the parent previously agreed to establish.

(5) “Noncustodial parent” means a parent who is not a custodial parent at the time of the commencement of the guardianship proceeding.

(6) “Parent” means a child’s biological or adoptive parent, including custodial parents; noncustodial parents; parents with legal or physical responsibilities, or both; and parents whose rights have never been adjudicated.

(7) “Parent-child contact” means the right of a parent to have visitation with the child by court order.

(8) “Standby guardianship” means a consensual guardianship agreement between the custodial parent and their chosen guardian that meets the requirements of section 2626a of this title, in which the custodial parent has been subject to an adverse immigration action that has rendered the parent unavailable to care for their child.

(9) “Adverse immigration action” means:

(A) arrest or apprehension by any federal law enforcement officer for an alleged violation of federal immigration law;

(B) arrest, detention, or custody by the Department of Homeland Security, or a federal, state, or local agency authorized by or acting on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security, for an alleged violation of federal immigration law;

(C) departure from the United States under an order of removal, deportation, exclusion, voluntary departure, or expedited removal or a stipulation of voluntary departure;

(D) the denial, revocation, or delay of the issuance of a visa or transportation letter by the Department of State;

(E) the denial, revocation, or delay of the issuance of a parole document or reentry permit by the Department of Homeland Security; or

(F) the denial of admission or entry into the United States by the Department of Homeland Security or other local or state officer acting on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security.

Sec. 3. 14 V.S.A. § 2623 is amended to read:

§ 2623. PETITION FOR GUARDIANSHIP OF MINOR; SERVICE

(a) A parent or a person interested in the welfare of a minor may file a petition with the Probate Division of the Superior Court for the appointment of a guardian for a child. The petition shall state:

- (1) the names and addresses of the parents, the child, and the proposed guardian;
- (2) the proposed guardian's relationship to the child;
- (3) the names of all members of the proposed guardian's household and each person's relationship to the proposed guardian and the child;
- (4) that the child is alleged to be a child in need of guardianship;
- (5) specific reasons with supporting facts why guardianship is sought;
- (6) whether the parties agree that the child is in need of guardianship and that the proposed guardian should be appointed as guardian;
- (7) the child's current school and grade level;
- (8) if the proposed guardian intends to change the child's current school, the name and location of the proposed new school and the estimated date when the child would enroll;
- (9) the places where the child has lived during the last five years, and the names and present addresses of the persons with whom the child has lived during that period; and
- (10) any prior or current court proceedings, child support matters, or parent-child contact orders involving the child;
- (11) whether the petition seeks a standby guardianship and the reasons for the request, including the adverse immigration action that the custodial parent is subject to; and
- (12) whether the petition is an emergency petition filed pursuant to subdivision 2625(f)(1) of this title.

(b)(1) A petition for guardianship of a child under this section shall be served on all parties and interested persons as provided by Rule 4 of the Vermont Rules of Probate Procedure.

(2)(A) The Probate Division may waive the notice requirements of subdivision (1) of this subsection (b) with respect to a parent if the court finds that:

- (i) the identity of the parent is unknown; ~~or~~
- (ii) the location of the parent is unknown and cannot be determined with reasonable effort; or

(iii)(I) the custodial parent is detained as the result of an adverse immigration action; and

(II) the guardian and the custodial parent's attorney are unable to contact the custodial parent after making reasonable efforts.

(B) After a guardianship for a child is created, the Probate Division shall reopen the proceeding at the request of a parent of the child who did not receive notice of the proceeding as required by this subsection (b).

Sec. 4. 14 V.S.A. § 2625 is amended to read:

§ 2625. HEARING; COUNSEL; GUARDIAN AD LITEM

(a) The Probate Division shall schedule a hearing upon the filing of the petition and shall provide notice of the hearing to all parties and interested persons who were provided notice under subdivision 2623(c)(1) of this title.

(b) The child shall attend the hearing if ~~he or she~~ the child is 14 years of age or older unless the child's presence is excused by the court for good cause. The child may attend the hearing if ~~he or she~~ the child is less than 14 years of age.

(c) The court shall appoint counsel for the child if the child will be called as a witness. In all other cases, the court may appoint counsel for the child.

(d)(1) The child may be called as a witness only if the court finds after hearing that:

(A) the child's testimony is necessary to assist the court in determining the issue before it;

(B) the probative value of the child's testimony outweighs the potential detriment to the child; and

(C) the evidence sought is not reasonably available by any other means.

(2) The examination of a child called as a witness may be conducted by the court in chambers in the presence of such other persons as the court may specify and shall be recorded.

(e) The court may appoint a guardian ad litem for the child on motion of a party or on the court's own motion.

(f)(1) The court may grant an emergency guardianship petition filed ex parte by the proposed guardian, or by the custodial parent's attorney in the case of a standby guardianship petition filed pursuant to section 2626a of this title, if the court finds that:

(A)(i) both parents are deceased or medically incapacitated; ~~and~~ or

(ii) in the case of a standby guardianship petition filed pursuant to section 2626a of this title, the custodial parent has been subject to an adverse immigration action that renders the parent unavailable to care for the child; and

(B) the best interests of the child require that a guardian be appointed without delay and before a hearing is held.

(2) If the court grants an emergency guardianship petition pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection (f), it shall schedule a hearing on the petition as soon as practicable and in no event more than three business days after the petition is filed.

Sec. 5. 14 V.S.A. § 2626a is added to read:

§ 2626a. CONSENSUAL STANDBY GUARDIANSHIP

(a)(1) If the petition requests a consensual standby guardianship, the petition shall include or be accompanied by a consent signed by the custodial parent attesting that the custodial parent understands the nature of the standby guardianship and knowingly and voluntarily consents to the standby guardianship.

(2) The consent required by this subsection shall be on a form approved by the Court Administrator.

(b)(1) The court shall schedule a hearing on the petition within 14 days. The custodial parent shall be permitted to appear at and participate in the hearing remotely.

(2) On or before the date of the hearing, the parties shall file an agreement between the proposed guardian and the custodial parents. The agreement shall provide:

(A) that the parties are creating a standby guardianship that is effective only if the custodial parent has been subject to an adverse immigration action that renders the custodial parent unavailable to care for the child;

(B) the responsibilities of the guardian;

(C) the responsibilities of the parents;

(D) the expected duration of the guardianship, if known;

(E) parent-child contact and parental involvement in decision making; and

(F) that the guardianship shall presumptively terminate if the custodial parent is released from custody and reunited with the child.

(3) Any party may notify the court that the guardianship is presumptively terminated pursuant to subdivision (2)(F) of this subsection.

(c) Vermont Rule of Probate Procedure 43 (relaxed rules of evidence in probate proceedings) shall apply to hearings under this section.

(d) The court shall grant the petition if it finds after the hearing by clear and convincing evidence that:

(1) the child is a child in need of guardianship as defined in subdivision 2622(2)(A) of this title because the parent has been subject to an adverse immigration action that renders the parent unavailable to care for the child;

(2) the child's custodial parents knowingly and voluntarily consented to the standby guardianship;

(3) the guardian or the custodial parent's attorney made reasonable efforts to notify the parent of the proceeding;

(4) the agreement is voluntary;

(5) the proposed guardian is suitable; and

(6) the guardianship is in the best interests of the child.

(e) There shall be a rebuttable presumption that the guardianship is in the best interests of the child if:

(1) the custodial parent has been subject to an adverse immigration action and is unavailable to care for their child;

(2) all parties consented to the guardianship; and

(3) the custodial parent is represented by an attorney.

(f) If the court grants the petition, it shall approve the agreement at the hearing and issue an order establishing a guardianship under section 2628 of this title within 45 days after the petition was filed, unless the court extends the time for issuing the order for good cause shown. The order shall be consistent with the terms of the parties' agreement unless the court finds that the agreement was not reached voluntarily or is not in the best interests of the child.

Sec. 6. 14 V.S.A. § 2628 is amended to read:

§ 2628. GUARDIANSHIP ORDER

(a) If the court grants a petition for guardianship of a child under subsection 2626(d), 2626a(d), or 2627(d) of this title, the court shall enter an order establishing a guardianship and naming the proposed guardian as the child's guardian.

(b) A guardianship order issued under this section shall include provisions addressing the following matters:

(1) the powers and duties of the guardian consistent with section 2629 of this title;

(2) the expected duration of the guardianship, if known;

(3) a family plan on a form approved by the Court Administrator that:

(A) in a consensual case is consistent with the parties' agreement; or

(B) in a nonconsensual case includes, at a minimum, provisions that address parent-child contact consistent with section 2630 of this title; and

(4) the process for reviewing the order consistent with section 2631 of this title.

Sec. 7. 14 V.S.A. § 2629 is amended to read:

§ 2629. POWERS AND DUTIES OF GUARDIAN

(a) The court shall specify the powers and duties of the guardian in the guardianship order.

(b) The duties of a custodial guardian shall include the duty to:

(1) take custody of the child and establish ~~his or her~~ the child's place of residence, provided that a guardian shall not change the residence of the child to a location outside the State of Vermont without prior authorization by the court following notice to the parties and an opportunity for hearing;

(2) make decisions related to the child's education;

(3) make decisions related to the child's physical and mental health, including consent to medical treatment and medication;

(4) make decisions concerning the child's contact with others, provided that the guardian shall comply with all provisions of the guardianship order regarding parent-child contact and contact with siblings;

(5) receive funds paid for the support of the child, including child support and government benefits; and

(6) file an annual status report to the Probate Division, with a copy to each parent at ~~his or her~~ the parent's last known address, including the following information:

(A) the current address of the child and each parent;

(B) the child's health care and health needs, including any medical and mental health services the child received;

(C) the child's educational needs and progress, including the name of the child's school, day care, or other early education program, the child's grade level, and the child's educational achievements;

(D) contact between the child and ~~his or her~~ the child's parents, including the frequency and duration of the contact and whether it was supervised;

(E) how the parents have been involved in decision making for the child;

(F) how the guardian has carried out ~~his or her~~ the guardian's responsibilities and duties, including efforts made to include the child's parents in the child's life;

(G) the child's strengths, challenges, and any other areas of concern; and

(H) recommendations with supporting reasons as to whether the guardianship order should be continued, modified, or terminated.

(c) In the case of a standby guardianship petition filed pursuant to section 2626a of this title, the guardian shall provide status reports to the custodial parent at the parent's last known email address and to the custodial parent's attorney at the attorney's last known address.

Sec. 8. 14 V.S.A. § 2632 is amended to read:

§ 2632. TERMINATION

(a) A parent may file a motion to terminate a guardianship at any time. The motion shall be filed with the Probate Division that issued the guardianship order and served on all parties and interested persons.

(b)(1) If the motion to terminate is made with respect to a consensual guardianship established under section 2626 of this title or a standby guardianship established under section 2626a of this title, the court shall grant the motion and terminate the guardianship unless the guardian files a motion to continue the guardianship within 30 days after the motion to terminate is served. In the case of a standby guardianship established under section 2626a

of this title, the court may, for good cause shown, accept filings that do not meet the format and signing requirements for the motion under Vermont Rules of Probate Procedure 10 and 11.

(2) If the guardian files a motion to continue the guardianship, the matter shall be set for hearing and treated as a nonconsensual guardianship proceeding under section 2627 of this title. The parent shall not be required to show a change in circumstances, and the court shall not grant the motion to continue the guardianship unless the guardian establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the minor is a child in need of guardianship under subdivision 2622(2)(B) of this title. In the case of a standby guardianship established under section 2626 of this title, the custodial parent shall be permitted to appear at and participate in the hearing remotely.

(3) If the court grants the motion to continue, it shall issue an order establishing a guardianship under section 2628 of this title.

(c)(1) If the motion to terminate the guardianship is made with respect to a nonconsensual guardianship established under section 2627 or subdivision 2632(b)(3) of this title, the court shall dismiss the motion unless the parent establishes that a change in circumstances has occurred since the previous guardianship order was issued.

(2) If the court finds that a change in circumstances has occurred since the previous guardianship order was issued, the court shall grant the motion to terminate the guardianship unless the guardian establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the minor is a child in need of guardianship under subdivision 2622(2)(B) of this title.

Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Sec. 1 shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(b) Secs. 2–8 and this section shall take effect on passage.

For Informational Purposes

H.C.R. Approval Deadline

To guarantee that any 2025 House Concurrent Resolution that has been drafted is printed in a 2025 House Calendar and Addendum, the sponsor of the H.C.R. must return approval of the draft, along with the final list of any cosponsors, to Michael Chernick in the Office of Legislative Counsel by **5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14, 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 #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]*

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 #3247: \$2,875,419.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families to support families affected by the July 2024 flood event. The request includes three (3) limited-service positions. Two (2) Emergency Management Specialists to the AHS central office and one (1) Grants and Contract Manager to the Department of

Children and Families Positions funded through June 30, 2027.
[Received 04/10/2025, expedited review requested 04/10/2025]

JFO #3248: \$35,603.00 to the Vermont Department of Libraries from the Vermont Community Foundation and the dissolution of the VT Public Library Foundation. The grant will provide modest grants to VT libraries with a preference for smaller libraries and for programs and projects that support children and diversity. *[Received April 10, 2025]*

JFO #3249: \$22,117.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Corrections to ensure compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). *[Received April 10, 2025]*

JFO #3250: \$391,666.00 to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation from the Northern Border Regional Commission. Funds will support the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaboration (VOREC) Program Director as well as VOREC initiatives. *[Received April 11, 2025]*

JFO #3251: \$50,000.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Central Office from the National Governor's Association. The funds will support state-side improvements of service-to-career pathways, with a focus on emergency responders. *[Received April 11, 2025]*

JFO #3252: \$10,000,000.00 to the Vermont Department of Libraries from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Public Facilities Preservation Initiative grant will provide smaller grants to rural libraries for the completion of necessary capital improvement projects. *[Received April 11, 2025]*

JFO #3253: \$20,000.00 to the Vermont Department of Public Safety, Vermont State Police. Funds will be used by the Vermont Boating Law Administrator, with the support of the Vermont Department of Health, to create a comprehensive boating injury data tracking system. *[Received May 6, 2025]*

JFO #3254: \$994,435.00 to the Vermont Department Public Safety, Vermont Emergency Management from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Funds for emergency work and repair/replacement of disaster damaged facilities during the severe storm and flooding event in Lamoille County from June 22-24, 2024. *[Received May 6, 2025]*

JFO #3255: \$41,000.00 to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Department of Housing and Community Development. Funds will be used to restore the Baldwin Model K

piano, once played by First Lady Grace Coolidge, which now resides in the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site in Plymouth, VT.
[Received May 6, 2025]