

1 S.2

2 Introduced by Senator Lyons

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Health; health equity; Office of Health Equity

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish the

7 Office of Health Equity within the Department of Health.

8 An act relating to establishing the Office of Health Equity within the
9 Department of Health

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

11 Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 5003 is amended to read:

12 § 5003. DUTIES OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL EQUITY

13 (a) The Executive Director of Racial Equity (Director) shall work with the
14 agencies and departments to implement a program of continuing coordination
15 and improvement of activities in State government in order to combat systemic
16 racial disparities and measure progress toward fair and impartial governance,
17 including:

18 (1) overseeing a comprehensive organizational review to identify
19 systemic racism in each of the three branches of State government and
20 inventory systems in place that engender racial disparities;

1 (D) the populations served and specific issues addressed by the
2 Office;

3 (E) the duties of the Office, including how grant funds shall be
4 managed and distributed; and

5 (F) the time frame and necessary steps to establish the Office;

6 (2) provide advice and make recommendations to the Office of Health
7 Equity once established, including input on:

8 (A) any rules or policies proposed by the Office;

9 (B) the awarding of grants and the development of programs and
10 services;

11 (C) the needs, priorities, programs, and policies relating to the health
12 of individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color; individuals
13 who are LGBTQ; and individuals with disabilities; and

14 (D) any other issue on which the Office of Health Equity requests
15 assistance from the Advisory Commission;

16 (3) review, monitor, and advise all State agencies regarding the impact
17 of current and emerging State policies, procedures, practices, laws, and rules
18 on the health of individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color;
19 individuals who are LGBTQ; and individuals with disabilities;

20 (4) identify and examine the limitations and problems associated with
21 existing laws, rules, programs, and services related to the health status of

1 individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color; individuals who
2 are LGBTQ; and individuals with disabilities;

3 (5) advise the Department of Health and the General Assembly on any
4 funding decisions relating to eliminating health disparities and promoting
5 health equity, including the distribution of federal monies related to COVID-
6 19;

7 (6) to the extent funds are available for the purpose, distribute grants
8 that stimulate the development of community-based and neighborhood-based
9 projects that will improve the health outcomes of individuals who are Black,
10 Indigenous, and Persons of Color; individuals who are LGBTQ; and
11 individuals with disabilities; and

12 (7) advise the General Assembly on efforts to improve cultural
13 competency, cultural humility, and antiracism in the health care system
14 through training and continuing education requirements for health care
15 providers and other clinical professionals.

16 * * *

17 Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 254 is added to read:

18 § 254. OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY

19 (a) There is established the Office of Health Equity within the Department
20 of Health for the purpose of eliminating avoidable and unjust disparities in
21 health among Vermonters. The Office shall use a systemic and comprehensive

1 approach that addresses those social, economic, and environmental factors that
2 influence health outcomes.

3 (b) The Office of Health Equity shall be directed by an Executive Director,
4 an individual who shall be qualified by reason of education, expertise, and
5 experience and who may have a professional degree in public health, social or
6 environmental justice, or a related field. The Executive Director shall serve on
7 a full-time basis and shall be exempt from classified service.

8 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

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