

Report of Committee of Conference

H. 660

An act relating to fiscal year 2027 Opioid Abatement Special Fund appropriations.

The Committee of Conference to which were referred the disagreeing votes of the two Houses upon House Bill entitled:

H. 660 An act relating to fiscal year 2027 Opioid Abatement Special Fund appropriations

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the Senate recede from its proposal of amendment and that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Opioid Abatement Special Fund * * *

Sec. 1. APPROPRIATIONS; OPIOID ABATEMENT SPECIAL FUND

(a) In fiscal year 2027, the following sums shall be appropriated from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund established in 18 V.S.A. § 4774:

(1)(A) \$455,000.00 to the Department of Health to fund 26 outreach or case management staff positions within the preferred provider network for the provision of services that increase the motivation of and engagement with individuals with substance use disorder in settings such as police barracks, shelters, social service organizations, and elsewhere in the community.

(B) It is the intent of the General Assembly that these positions shall be funded annually by the Opioid Abatement Special Fund unless and until the Special Fund does not have sufficient monies to fund this expenditure.

(2)(A) \$1,600,000.00 to the Department of Health for recovery residences certified by the Vermont Alliance for Recovery Residences.

(B) It is the intent of the General Assembly that recovery residences be funded annually by the Opioid Abatement Special Fund unless and until the Special Fund does not have sufficient monies to fund this expenditure.

(3)(A) \$850,000.00 to the Department of Health for syringe services.

(B) It is the intent of the General Assembly that syringe services be funded annually by the Opioid Abatement Special Fund unless and until the Special Fund does not have sufficient monies to fund this expenditure.

(4) \$1,100,000.00 to the Department of Corrections to provide peer recovery center coaches in Vermont correctional facilities and in probation and parole offices to provide group and individual coaching and reentry support, which shall not be used to cover administrative expenses.

(5) \$250,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families' Office of Economic Opportunity to support long-term programs at shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness, including harm-reduction supports, transportation to recovery meetings and appointments, and clinical nursing programs.

(6)(A) \$1,200,000.00 to the Department of Health for both the creation of new opioid use disorder residential treatment beds at American Society of Addiction Medicine level 3.1 and for the creation of new recovery residence beds at National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) certification level III or above with priority given to unserved and underserved regions of the State.

(B) It is a priority of the General Assembly to fund treatment as part of opioid use disorder recovery.

(7) \$248,000.00 to the Department of Health for the Prehospital Vermont EMS Buprenorphine Treatment (PREVENT) Program to expand training for emergency service providers on carrying buprenorphine and administering buprenorphine after administering naloxone.

(8) \$35,000.00 to the Department of Health to subsidize room and board for individuals in Rutland Mental Health Services' transitional housing program.

(9) \$237,646.00 to the Department of Health for distribution to Springfield Project ACTION to support public safety enhancement team coordinator positions in Bennington, Springfield, Brattleboro, St. Johnsbury, and central Vermont for the purposes of providing administrative support, meeting facilitation, data tracking, outreach event coordination, and sustainability planning.

(10) \$500,000.00 to the Department of Health for distribution to recovery centers, upon consultation with the Vermont Recovery Network to determine allocations to individual recovery centers.

(11) \$287,000.00 to the Department of Public Safety to provide funding for expanding the Public Safety Enhancement Team's harm reduction and strategic community intervention efforts.

(12) \$875,000.00 to the Department for Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living to fund specialized employment services to individuals with opioid use disorder through HireAbility Vermont.

(b) Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 703, unless reverted by a future act of the General Assembly, the appropriations made in accordance with this section shall carry forward until fully expended.

Sec. 2. LEGISLATIVE INTENT; OVERDOSE PREVENTION CENTER

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to consider the operational status and funding needs of Burlington’s overdose prevention center during the fiscal year 2027 budget adjustment process. If the General Assembly finds that a location for the overdose prevention center has been procured by lease or purchase, the overdose prevention center is being fit up for its intended use, and the overdose prevention center is currently or will imminently become operational, it intends to appropriate up to \$1,100,000.00 to the Department of Health for purpose of awarding a grant to the City of Burlington for the work of the overdose prevention center.

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly to continue to appropriate funds annually from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund through at least fiscal year 2028 for the purpose of awarding grants to the City of Burlington for the operation of the overdose prevention center, unless the Special Fund does not have sufficient monies to fund this expenditure.

Sec. 3. LEGISLATIVE INTENT; HIREABILITY

It is the intent of the General Assembly that in fiscal year 2028 and thereafter, HireAbility Vermont be funded using General Fund monies.

Sec. 4. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 22, Sec. 14, as amended by 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 113, Sec. C.112, is further amended to read:

Sec. 14. APPROPRIATION; OPIOID ABATEMENT SPECIAL FUND

In fiscal year 2023, the following monies shall be appropriated from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 4774:

(1)(A) ~~\$1,500,000 divided equally between four opioid treatment programs~~ to cover costs associated with partnering with other health care providers to expand satellite locations for the dosing of medications, including costs associated with the satellite locations’ physical facilities, staff time at the satellite locations, and staff time at opioid treatment programs to prepare medications and coordinate with satellite locations;

(B) the satellite locations established pursuant to this subdivision (1) shall be located in Addison County; and eastern or southern Vermont, ~~and in a facility operated by the Department of Corrections;~~

(2) \$500,000 to establish a ~~second Chittenden Clinic Addiction Treatment Center~~ satellite location in northwestern Vermont;

* * *

Sec. 5. 18 V.S.A. § 4772 is amended to read:

§ 4772. OPIOID SETTLEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

* * *

(c) Powers and duties. The Advisory Committee shall demonstrate broad ongoing consultation with individuals living with opioid use disorder about their direct experience with related systems, including medication for opioid use disorder, residential treatment, recovery services, harm reduction services, overdose, supervision by the Department of Corrections, and involvement with the Department for Children and Families' Family Services Division. To that end, the Advisory Committee shall demonstrate consultation with individuals with direct lived experience of opioid use disorder, frontline support professionals, the Substance Misuse Oversight Prevention and Advisory Council, the Health Equity Advisory Commission, and other stakeholders to identify spending priorities as related to opioid use disorder prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services and harm reduction strategies for the purpose of providing recommendations to the Governor, the Department of Health, and the General Assembly on prioritizing spending from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund. Each ongoing funding proposal considered by the Advisory Committee shall include a sustainability plan from the applicant to ensure consideration of future expenses and available resources apart from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund. The Advisory Committee shall consider:

(1) the impact of the opioid crisis on communities throughout Vermont, including communities' abatement needs and proposals for abatement strategies and responses;

(2) the perspectives of and proposals from opioid use disorder prevention coalitions, recovery centers, and medication for opioid use disorder providers; and

(3) the ongoing challenges of the opioid crisis on marginalized populations, including individuals who have a lived experience of opioid use disorder.

* * *

(e) ~~Presentation~~ Recommendations. Annually, the Advisory Committee shall vote on its recommendations. Recommendations shall be informed by outcomes and measurements reported by previous grantees. In developing its recommendations, the Advisory Committee shall consult with the Office of the Attorney General regarding allowable uses of the Special Fund. If the recommendations are supported by an affirmative vote of the majority, the Advisory Committee shall present its recommendations for expenditures from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund established pursuant to this subchapter to the Department of Health and concurrently submit its recommendations in writing to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare. The Advisory Committee's written recommendations shall address how each recommendation meets one or more of the criteria listed in subsections 4774(b) and (c) of this subchapter. The Advisory Committee shall give priority

consideration to services requiring funding on an ongoing basis.

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Sec. 6. 18 V.S.A. § 4774 is amended to read:

§ 4774. OPIOID ABATEMENT SPECIAL FUND

(a)(1) There is created the Opioid Abatement Special Fund, a special fund established and managed pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5 and administered by the Department of Health. The Opioid Abatement Special Fund shall consist of all abatement account fund monies disbursed to the Department from the national abatement account fund, the national opioid abatement trust, the supplemental opioid abatement fund, or any other settlement funds that must be utilized exclusively for opioid prevention, intervention, treatment, recovery, ~~and~~ harm reduction services, co-occurring mental health conditions, and co-occurring substance use disorders.

(2) The Department shall submit a spending plan to the General Assembly, informed by the recommendations of the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee established pursuant to section 4772 of this subchapter, annually on or before January 15 and once funding is appropriated by the General Assembly from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund, the Department shall request to have the funds formally released from the national abatement account fund, the national opioid abatement trust, the supplemental opioid abatement fund, or any other settlement funds that must be utilized exclusively for opioid prevention, intervention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction services, co-occurring mental health conditions, and co-occurring substance use disorders. The Department shall disburse monies from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 3.

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Sec. 7. APPROPRIATION REVIEW; FISCAL YEAR 2028 PROPOSAL
SUSPENSION

Notwithstanding 18 V.S.A. § 4772(e), the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee shall not accept funding proposals or make funding recommendations from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund for fiscal year 2028, unless a program or initiative was previously identified in statute as intended for annual funding. It instead shall review the outcomes of programs and initiatives previously funded through the Opioid Abatement Special Fund to assess effectiveness, long-term sustainability, and the appropriateness of the Opioid Abatement Special Fund as a funding source, where applicable, to inform recommendations made in fiscal year 2029 and thereafter.

Sec. 8. QUARTERLY REPORTING; EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID
ABATEMENT SPECIAL FUND MONIES

The Department of Health shall submit to the General Assembly quarterly

reports regarding expenditures from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund. Specifically, the reports shall identify funds appropriated from the Special Fund that remain unobligated or unspent, or both, and shall include an explanation as to why the funds have not been fully distributed. Reports due on October 1, 2026, and July 1, 2027, shall be submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committee. Reports due on January 1, 2027, and April 1, 2027, shall be submitted to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare. The Department shall post reports required pursuant to this section on its website.

Sec. 9. REVERSIONS

Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, in fiscal year 2027, the following amounts shall revert to the Opioid Abatement Special Fund from the accounts indicated:

<u>3420892313 VDH-Opioid Sp. Fund Prov Satellites</u>	<u>\$444,000.00</u>
<u>3420892313 VDH-Opioid Sp. Fund Wound Care</u>	<u>\$8,287.34</u>
<u>3420892501 VDH-Opioid Sp. Fund Stabilization Beds</u>	<u>\$1,000,000.00</u>

* * * Syringe Recovery Plan * * *

Sec. 10. PLAN; SYRINGE RECOVERY

On or before December 15, 2026, the Department of Health shall submit a plan to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare containing recommendations for the implementation of one or more syringe recovery models throughout the State to enhance public health and safety. The plan shall require syringe service providers to report to the Department on the percentage of distributed syringes that are returned to the provider or otherwise collected.

* * * Substance Misuse Prevention Special Fund * * *

Sec. 11. APPROPRIATIONS; SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION SPECIAL FUND

In fiscal year 2027, the following monies shall be appropriated from the Substance Misuse Prevention Special Fund established pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 4812:

(1) \$288,935.00 to the Department of Health for distribution to Elevate Youth Services to support the creation of a low-barrier, drop-in teen center in Barre to provide food, activities, positive adults role models, peer counselors, prevention and recovery programming, and direct connection to treatments;

(2) \$124,999.00 to the Department of Health for distribution to the Greater Falls Connections to enhance youth engagement and education and to

expand prevention-focused staffing and youth programming space in response to increasing community need;

(3) \$200,000.00 to the Department of Health for distribution to Interaction: Friends for Change to increase access to community-based therapy, housing, crisis, medical, recovery, and employment supports for youth in Windham County; and

(4) \$26,697.00 to the Department of Health for distribution to Winooski Partnership for Prevention to provide funding for staff time and stipends for partners to deliver medicine safety education to elementary-aged youth during school with family engagement.

Sec. 12. 18 V.S.A. § 4812 is amended to read:

§ 4812. SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION SPECIAL FUND

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(e) As part of its annual budget presentation, the Department shall report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on its specific spending proposal from the Substance Misuse Prevention Special Fund for the coming fiscal year. The report shall include an estimate of the monies in the Special Fund anticipated to remain unallocated at the end of the fiscal year.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 13. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to fiscal year 2027 Opioid Abatement Special Fund and Substance Misuse Prevention Special Fund appropriations”

*SEN. VIRGINIA V. LYONS
SEN. MARTINE LAROCQUE GULICK
SEN. JOHN BENSON
Committee on the part of the Senate
REP. THERESA A. WOOD
REP. ERIC MAGUIRE
REP. TIFFANY BLUEMLE
Committee on the part of the House*