

NO. 68. AN ACT RELATING TO CHILD POVERTY IN VERMONT.

(S.177)

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

Sec. 1. VERMONT CHILD POVERTY COUNCIL

(a) The Vermont child poverty council is created to examine child poverty in Vermont and to make recommendations to the governor and general assembly on methods of improving the financial stability and well-being of children. The council shall develop a ten-year plan to reduce the number of children living in poverty in the state by at least 50 percent.

(b)(1) The council shall consist of the following members or their designees:

(A) the president pro tempore of the senate;

(B) the speaker of the house of representatives;

(C) the chair of the senate committee on health and welfare;

(D) the chair of the house committee on human services;

(E) the chair of the senate committee on education;

(F) the chair of the house committee on education;

(G) the commissioners of the departments for children and families; of health; of education; and of labor; and

(H) one representative each from Voices for Vermont's Children, the Vermont low income advocacy council, Vermont Legal Aid, and the Vermont superintendents' association.

(2) The council, at its first meeting, shall elect one of the legislative members as chair or two legislative members as cochairs. The legislative council and the joint fiscal office shall provide staff support to the council.

(3) The council shall meet up to six times while the general assembly is not in session to perform its functions under this section. In addition, during the 2007 legislative interim, the council shall hold 14 public hearings as required under subsection (d) of this section.

(c) The plan shall contain:

(1) an identification and analysis of the occurrence of poverty in the state;

(2) an analysis of the long-term effects of child poverty on children, their families, and their communities;

(3) an analysis of costs of child poverty to municipalities and the state;

(4) an inventory of state-wide public and private programs that address child poverty;

(5) the percentage of the target population served by such programs and the current state funding levels, if any, for such programs;

(6) an identification and analysis of any deficiencies or inefficiencies of such programs; and

(7) procedures and priorities for implementing strategies and biannual benchmarks to achieve at least a 50 percent reduction in child poverty in the

state by June 30, 2017. Such procedures, priorities, and benchmarks shall include improving or adequately funding:

(A) workforce training and placement to promote career progression, for parents of children living in poverty;

(B) educational opportunities, including higher education opportunities, and advancement for such parents and children, including, but not limited to, pre-literacy, literacy, and family literacy programs;

(C) affordable housing for such parents and children;

(D) early care and education programs for such children and their families;

(E) after-school programs and mentoring programs for such children and their families;

(F) affordable health care access for such parents and children, including access to mental health services and family planning;

(G) treatment programs and services, including substance abuse programs and services, for such parents and children;

(H) accessible childhood nutrition programs; and

(I) the Reach-Up program and other public benefit programs through the agency of human services serving low income families.

(d) In developing the working plan, the council shall first consult with experts, with parents of children living in poverty, and with providers of

services to children and families living in poverty. The council shall hold one public hearing in each of the 14 counties.

(e) Funds from private and public sources may be accepted and utilized by the council to develop and implement the plan and provisions of this section. Legislative members of the committee shall be entitled to compensation and reimbursement for expenses under section 406 of Title 2. All other members not receiving compensation for service on the committee from another source are entitled to compensation under section 1010 of Title 32.

(f) Not later than January 1, 2008, the council shall submit the working plan to the house committees on appropriations and human services and the senate committees on appropriations and health and welfare. On January 1, 2009, and annually thereafter, until January 1, 2018, the council shall report to these committees on yearly progress toward benchmarks, updates to the plan, and recommendations for budgetary and policy changes in order to accomplish the goals of this act

(g) The council shall cease to exist on June 30, 2018.

Approved: June 5, 2007