



Supporting Vermonters to lead healthy and satisfying lives community by community



Legislative Update for May 3, 2022

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE LEGISLATURE

The current goal is to end the legislative session on May 6th. Senate Committees that meet in the morning are closing, but House Committees will remain active through the end of the session. Committees of conference are expected on several key bills which Vermont Care Partners is advocating on: H.740, H.720, S.285, H.159

The Senate passed the FY23 budget with an 8% rate increase for designated and specialized service agencies (DA/SSAs), the House version has a 7% increase. The House did not concur with the Senate and a Committee of Conference to work through the differences has been formed. Senators Kitchel, Baruth and Westman will represent the Senate and Representatives Hooper, Jessup and Fagan will represent the House. This rate increase will be one of the subjects for negotiations.

There are also differences in the House and Senate revenue packages, with the Senate having more revenues. The negotiations on revenues will influence the outcome of the budget negotiation. The budget is generally the last bill to be finalized and then the session is over. However, veto threats have been made by the Governor. If there is a veto on the revenue and/or budget bills, the legislature will be called back into session to try to override the veto, and if unsuccessful, to negotiate to achieve resolution of outstanding differences between the executive and legislative branches of government.

This Week's Testimony and Legislative Action

House of Representatives Set to finalize S.285

On Friday, April 29th the House approved S.285 as amended by the House Health Care Committee and approved the amendment of the House Appropriations Committee to reduce the funding from \$5 million to \$4.5 million. The full House is set to finalize the Bill (third reading) at its next meeting.

Senate Health and Welfare Reviews House Changes to S.285

Legislative Counsel Jen Carbee presented a side-by-side comparison of the House and Senate versions of S.285 in preparation for the consideration of the Bill returning from the Senate. Here is the link:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/Senate%20Health%20and%20Welfare/Bills/S.285/Drafts,%20Amendments,%20and%20Legal%20Documents/S.285~Jennifer%20Carbee~House%20and%20Senate%20-%20Side%20by%20Side~4-25-2022.pdf>

Senator Lyons believes the full continuum of health care is stronger in the Senate version. Senator Hooker wants to see a more robust community engagement process. The Senate Health and Welfare will determine if a conference committee is necessary or if they would like to offer further amendment to the Bill.

H.720 the Developmental Disabilities Bill Amended then passed by Senate and Sent to the House

The full Senate voted to amend H.720 the Developmental Disabilities Bill and now the House will determine if they will accept the amendment, further amend the bill or request a committee of conference. Here is the amendment as passed by the Senate on Friday.

Sec. 3. REPORT; CASE MANAGER QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

On or before November 15, 2022, the designated and specialized service agencies and other contracted agencies providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities shall jointly submit a written report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare regarding the oversight of residential placements for individuals with developmental disabilities. The report shall, at a minimum:

- (1) address the quality of services provided, including health and safety, in accordance with personalized service plans for the individuals served in these settings;
- (2) identify the current required level of oversight and on-site visitation by case managers at the designated and specialized service agencies and other contracted agencies providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities and recommend any modifications to these requirements; and
- (3) analyze the fiscal and workforce impacts of ensuring at least one annual on-site visit is made by the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living to the designated and specialized service agencies and other contracted agencies providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Budget Conference Committee Negotiations Begin

The FY23 Budget Conference Committee has been working through language and other areas of disagreement but must wait for revenue picture to clear up on larger budget issues such as the level of rate increase for designated and specialized service agencies.

Last year's budget provided for free last dollar tuition (only after available Federal and State financial aid is applied to ensure no cost to the student) to one year of undergraduate studies for critical occupations careers which included bachelor level studies in mental health counseling, and psychology and social work programs. The FY23 budget bill will include \$7,350,000 carried forward for the 2022–2023 school year. If demand from undergraduates (including mental health counseling and social work) is met, then funds may be used to pay for tuition for the following graduate programs: "(i) Master's in Education (all programs); (ii) Master's in Educational Leadership; (iii) Master's of Arts and Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in School Psychology; (iv) Master's in Counseling; (v) Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling; and (vi) Master's in Clinical Social Work."

Senate Government Operations Reviews H.96 on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Legislative Counsel Damien Leonard reviewed changes in version 1.2 of H.96 with the Senate Committee on Government Operations. The committee discussed a terminology change in section 902 based on feedback from Wilda White about the differences between people who identify as having a disability and those with a condition that causes them to be perceived by others as having a disability, but who do not identify as such. With input from present community members, the committee finalized the passage to read “individuals with a physical, psychiatric, or mental condition or disability and the families of individuals with a physical, psychiatric, or mental condition or disability.”

In the section describing the populations and communities affected by State racism and discrimination, Senator Ram Hinsdale suggested changing “people of color” to more specifically address the harm caused by specific, systemic discrimination from anti-black racism. The Committee and community members discussed appropriate and inclusive terms, and with advice from Wilda White to “say what you mean”, settled on “Black individuals and other individuals of color.”

In further discussion about the selection of panel members, a concern was raised about whether the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) represents community members who do not self-identify as disabled yet are perceived as such. The committee discussed alternatives and concluded that VCIL provides the broadest scope of the disability community.

The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Appropriations with a proposal of amendment from the Senate Committee on Government Operations. The Senate Appropriations Committee recommended a minor modification clarifying the State staff positions. The full Senate considered the recommendations of the Committees on Friday, April 29th.

Status Update on Bills of Interest

H.159 Opens access to worker relocation financial assistance – in House Ways and Means

H.655 Telehealth Licensure/registration and provisional licensure – Passed full Legislature

H.703 Tuition Assistance and Loan Repayment – Senate Economic Development will return to it

H.728 Opioid Settlement Bill – amended and up for consideration by the full Senate

S.195 Peer Certification Bill – House proposal of amendment is under consideration by Senate

S.197- Inventory of Crisis support programs and new school mental health grants – passed Legislature

Vermont Care Partners Legislative Agenda for 2022

The Vermont Care Partners legislative agenda is quite comprehensive and focuses on our need for adequate resources to meet our mission and mandates. See this link:

<https://vermontcarepartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/legislative-agenda-2022-working-draft-1-1.pdf>

Plan to Participate in Advocacy Events

Save the Date! Vermont Disability Awareness Day

Tuesday, May 10th - Time: TBD

Ming M. Canaday - Keynote Speaker

Ming M. Canaday is the founder of Traipsin' Global On

Wheels: <https://www.traipsinglobalonwheels.com/>



[TGOW - Traipsin' Global On Wheels](https://www.traipsinglobalonwheels.com/)

At Traipsin Global On Wheels our mission is to provide resources and discussions for disability advocacy, health and fitness tips, and accessible travel tips.

www.traipsinglobalonwheels.com

In addition to her extensive coaching experience with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures, she has done speaking engagements and held workshops all around the globe to advocate and empower people with disabilities to live their best lives.

Information on Your Senators and Representatives

Follow this link to determine your legislators and access their contact information. Legislators are listed both by DA/SSA and by the Committee they serve on. Please note there are new legislators on committees that have purview over policy and funding for the Vermont Care Partners network.

[2021 Legislative Committees by DA-SSA.xlsx](#)

Action Circles Calendar

Action Circles maintains a calendar of Legislative breakfasts and events. This information can be found at: <https://www.action-circles.com/legislator-events/>

To take action or for more information, including the weekly committee schedules:

- Legislative home page: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>
- Sergeant-at-Arms Office: (802) 828-2228 or (800) 322-5616
- Legislators' email addresses may be found on the Legislature home page at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>
- Governor Phil Scott (802) 828-3333 or <http://governor.vermont.gov/>

The purpose of the legislative update is to inform individuals who are interested in developmental, mental health and substance abuse services about legislative advocacy, policy development and activities that occur in the State Legislature. The Vermont Council is a non-profit trade association which works in partnership with Vermont Care Network to form Vermont Care Partners. Together our mission is to provide statewide leadership for an integrated, high-quality system of comprehensive services and supports. Our membership consists of 16 designated developmental and mental health agencies.