

A 2020 Vision for Vermont

Vermonters have a long history of coming together to address hard issues: how to provide the best education for all students; how to ensure that workers are fairly paid and parents are able to feed, house, and care for their families; how to support people of all abilities to realize their full potential; and how to keep our communities vital, healthy, and our environment clean and safe.

We've shown time and again that we are capable of solving big problems. But we also know there's serious work still to be done.

Our strong advocacy community is evidence of Vermonters' values of hard work, helping neighbors, and fairness—and also to our persistence. The advocates who've contributed to this guide collaborate with individual residents, community and faith leaders, and elected officials to attain **state policies that advance and defend human rights and racial, social, and economic justice, environmental protections, and true democracy.**

To create a Vermont where all people can thrive:

- Vermonters need to be able to meet their basic needs.
- Vermonters need sustainable environmental and economic policies.
- Vermont children need to know that they're safe and supported so they can learn.
- Vermonters of all backgrounds need equitable opportunities to flourish.

To achieve these principles, we need to invest in Vermont's future: in clean water and air; toxic-free schools, homes, and workplaces; affordable, clean energy; support for all families, ensuring all have access to housing, health care, child care, and healthy food; full reproductive liberty; a criminal justice system that is equitable, effective, and restorative for individuals and communities; paid family and medical leave; and state agencies and institutions that treat everyone equitably and with dignity regardless of their skin color, zip code, income, or ability.

It's time to roll up our sleeves and create a Vermont that works for everyone.

Please note: The organizations proposing policy solutions in this guide have come together to initiate a conversation about creating a better Vermont. However, contributing to this policy guide does not indicate an organization's endorsement of all recommendations presented.

All Vermonters Deserve Safe, Clean Drinking Water, and Products That Are Free of Toxic Chemicals.

Vermont must hold polluters accountable for harm caused by toxic chemical contamination and reduce Vermonters' exposure to dangerous chemicals.

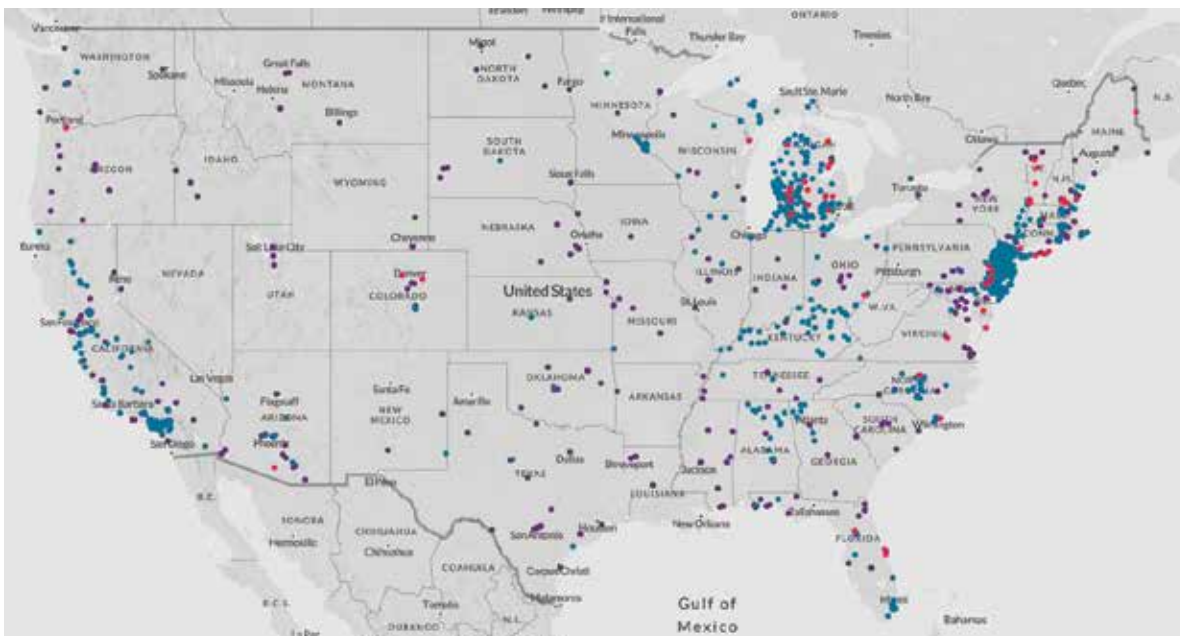
With a broken federal chemical regulatory system, states like Vermont must step up to protect our families from toxic chemicals.

By implementing protective chemical regulations, Vermont can help ensure that toxic polluters are held responsible for the harm they cause, such as covering medical monitoring expenses for victims of toxic exposure. Improved regulations can also help turn off the spigot of toxic chemicals like PFAS coming into our state in our children's products, food packaging, dental floss, firefighting foam, and carpets. PFAS

chemicals are linked to health problems like cancer, thyroid disease, and high blood pressure. When we import PFAS-containing products, Vermonters are exposed when they use the product, and after we throw them away, the chemicals can leach out of our landfills, into our waterways and contaminate our environment and drinking water. We can and must do more to ensure healthy, safe products and drinking water for all Vermonters.

You can help make Vermonters safer from dangerous toxic chemicals by talking to your legislators and neighbors about the need to act!

PFAS Contamination in the U.S.



Hundreds of Vermonters and tens of millions of Americans are being exposed to toxic PFAS chemicals in their drinking water.

- Military sites
- Drinking water
- Other known sites

Source: ewg.org

For more information on how to keep our communities healthy and free of toxic chemicals, please contact the Vermont Natural Resources Council (vnrc.org), Vermont Conservation Voters (vermontconservationvoters.org), and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (vpirg.org).

All Vermonters Deserve Safe, Clean Drinking Water, and Products That Are Free of Toxic Chemicals

1

Toxic PFAS contamination of drinking water has devastated some Vermont communities. PFAS chemicals have been dubbed “forever chemicals” because they persist in the environment indefinitely. Meanwhile, safer and cost-effective alternatives exist in the marketplace. *Do you support efforts to turn off the tap of PFAS chemicals coming into the state in products such as firefighting foam, food packaging, and residential carpets and rugs?*

2

Some Vermonters have high levels of contaminants like PFAS in their bodies, and now need increased medical care. *Do you support efforts to help ensure that Vermonters exposed to toxic pollution from industrial facilities can access medical screening, paid for by the polluter, to ensure they catch diseases as soon as possible?*

All Vermonters Deserve Safe, Affordable Energy and a Clean, Healthy Environment.

Efficiency and electrification are win-wins for Vermont's economy and Vermonters' wallets.

The biggest contributors to Vermont's climate pollution — transportation and heating — are also two categories that have a disproportionate impact on low-income Vermonters, many of whom spend over a quarter of their income paying for energy.

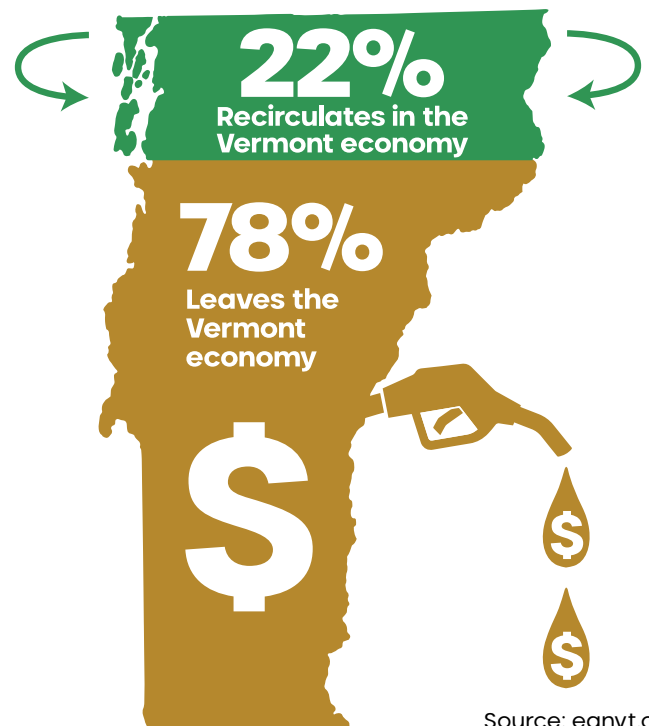
Efficiency and electrification (which is both cheaper and more efficient than fossil fuel heating or transportation) will dramatically lower our emissions, boost our local economy, and, most importantly, improve countless Vermonters' lives.

It's time to stand up for Vermont's people and environment by:

- Turning Vermont's climate pollution reduction goals into legally binding requirements to ensure Vermont's leaders are accountable for pursuing these types of policies to protect the health and well-being of Vermont's people and environment.
- Expanding the scope of Efficiency Vermont and our other efficiency utilities to help Vermonters reduce energy use and switch to efficient electric heating and transportation.

- Establishing a 100% renewable electricity requirement statewide by 2030 to help ensure that our energy needs are met with affordable, clean, local, and resilient energy sources.
- Participating in a strong, equitable Transportation & Climate Initiative, and invest in programs to incentivize electric vehicle adoption, development of charging facilities, and clean transit solutions.

Dollars spent on fossil fuels



Source: eanvt.org

For more information on bold, equitable solutions to the climate crisis, please contact the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (vpirg.org), Vermont Natural Resources Council (vnrc.org), and Vermont Conservation Voters (vermontconservationvoters.org).

All Vermonters Deserve Safe, Affordable Energy and a Clean, Healthy Environment

1

Vermont's climate pollution is up 13% from 1990 levels. We're an outlier in our region. All of our neighbors have seen decreases in their climate pollution over the same time period – including a 21% drop in Massachusetts. *What are you doing to reverse this trend and ensure Vermont actually meets its climate commitments?*

2

Vermont was once a clean energy leader – in particular, a clean energy jobs leader. But that trend is reversing. For instance, solar jobs in Vermont have decreased the past three years. Producing renewable energy locally is good. It's good for jobs. It's good for the environment. *What are you doing to make sure we produce more clean energy right here in Vermont?*

3

Our most vulnerable populations contribute the least to the climate crisis, yet they bear the largest brunt of its impacts. *What policies are you supporting that ensures Vermont does its part to address the climate crisis and does so in an equitable way that prioritizes Vermont's most vulnerable?*

4

Efficiency and electrification (which is both cheaper and more efficient than fossil fuel heating or transportation) will dramatically lower our emissions, boost our local economy, and, most importantly, improve countless Vermonters' lives. *What are we doing to increase and expand efficiency efforts in Vermont?*

5

Transportation is the number one contributor to climate pollution in Vermont. Vermonters need more access to affordable clean transportation options – electric vehicles, charging stations, more robust and clean public transit. *What are you doing to increase clean transportation options for Vermonters?*

Investing in Early Childhood Strengthens All Vermont Communities and Families.

Supporting critical investments through smart state budgets.

Supporting children through smart investments in the State Budget leads to stronger families, a more equitable education system, better health outcomes, and a more vibrant economy, now and in the future.

The legislature's decisions about the State Budget are critical not just to lower income Vermonters but to the entire community, as services all Vermonters rely on are suffering because of years of chronic underfunding by the State.

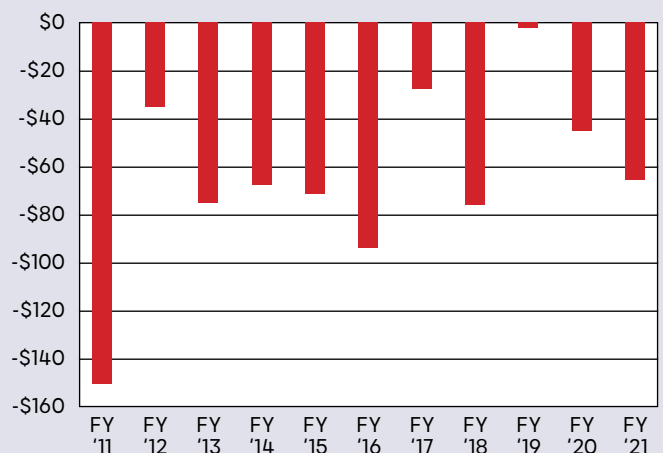
Some of the state programs and policies of concern to young children and families include:

- Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFAP)
- Early Intervention and Mental Health Services (CIS)
- Housing
- Parent Child Centers (PCCs)
- Child and Family Nutrition
- Workforce Development for Early Childhood Educators

Years of Level Funding, Increasing Challenges

Many of these programs have seen no funding increase in over a decade – nothing to take into account inflation, caseload increases, or increased case complexity. As a result, “level funding” is functionally an annual funding cut.

FY20 will be the 12th year in a row that projected state spending obligations will exceed projected state revenue



Most areas of the early childhood system have high staff turnover rates, many fail to meet standards of care for delivering services, and there are waiting lists for critical services.

Investing in these programs help all Vermonters by creating stronger communities, intervening to address issues when they first arise, and helping children and families thrive.

What can I do to help?

Talk to your legislators about the importance of making investment in these programs, which help all Vermonters. Tell them that level funding means programs will be weaker, just when we need them to be strengthened.

For more information on the importance of investing in early childhood services and how to get involved, contact Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance (vecaa.org).

Investing in Early Childhood Strengthens All Vermont Communities and Families

1

Accessing high-quality, affordable child care options can be a challenge for families and for employers. More than 50% of infants and toddlers likely to need child care don't have access to high-quality, affordable programs. *What are you hearing Vermont families and businesses say about the child care challenges they face?*

2

Access to healthy, local food is critical to children's social, physical, and educational development – yet, nearly 1 in 6 children in Vermont are food insecure. Programs like Farm to School and Universal School Meals address these disparities by integrating meals and nutrition education into every child's day. *Would you support investing in food access and learning in early childhood to improve future Vermonters' health and well-being?*

3

Chronic underfunding of Vermont's housing needs has limited children and families' access to safe, stable, and affordable housing – a key social determinant of health. In 2019, over 20% of 1000+ Vermonters experiencing homelessness were children, with many others living in insecure or unsafe conditions. *What policies or investments would you propose to address Vermont's housing challenges?*

4

Studies show that investing in Early Intervention, home visiting, and child and family mental health services for children 0 to 5 years old lead to better outcomes for children and families, and in school classrooms in later years. *Would you support increased investments in early childhood services as a way to support Vermont's stressed K-6 classrooms?*

5

In recent years a number of successful child care, housing, health, and nutrition programs in the state have been under-funded or unfunded, while at the same time proposals for new programs have been promoted by the Scott Administration and others. *How would you determine whether to support spending scarce resources on existing programs proven to be successful, as opposed to supporting new ones?*

All Vermonters Deserve Reproductive Liberty to be Guaranteed by the State Constitution.

Support Personal Reproductive Liberty – Prop 5 – a proposed amendment to the Vermont Constitution.

The Vermont Constitution is a declaration of the rights and liberties of its citizens. Prop 5 is a proposal that would amend the Constitution of the State of Vermont to reflect the Vermont value that everyone should be afforded personal reproductive liberty. The proposed amendment reached its first milestone by passing in the 2019-2020 legislature and will also be influenced by the election of the next legislature.

The Vermont legislature elected in 2020 will decide if citizens will have the opportunity to enshrine reproductive rights in our constitution. If Prop 5 passes again, guarantees for reproductive rights in Vermont will be decided by voters on Election Day in November 2022.

Prop 5 would guarantee the right to:

- Become pregnant
- Choose or refuse sterilization
- Choose abortion
- Choose or refuse contraception

Timeline:

The constitutional amendment must pass both the Senate and House chambers in two consecutive legislatures, followed by a vote by Vermonters in the general election.

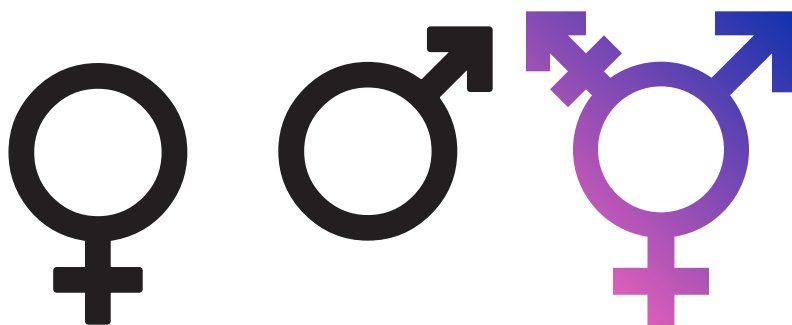
2019-2020: PASSED in the House and Senate

2021-2022: New House and Senate will vote

November 8, 2022 – Election Day –
VERMONT VOTERS DECIDE

What you can do:

Tell your friends, neighbors, and legislators that you support reproductive liberty and Prop 5!



For more information on personal reproductive liberty, contact Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund (ppvtaf.org).

All Vermonters Deserve Reproductive Liberty to be Guaranteed by the State Constitution

1

Prop 5 is a proposal that would amend the Constitution of the State of Vermont to reflect the value that everyone should be afforded personal reproductive liberty. *What will you do to help ensure your constituents have all the facts about Prop 5 by election day 2022?*

2

The majority of Vermonters do not want Roe v. Wade to be overturned, yet that is a real possibility as soon as this year. If Roe v. Wade is overturned, the decision about abortion rights could revert back to individual states. *What will you do to protect the reproductive rights of Vermonters that they've had for nearly 50 years?*

3

Reproductive liberty is a civil rights issue. Prop 5 would guarantee ALL Vermonters the right to become pregnant and carry a pregnancy to term; to choose or refuse sterilization; to choose abortion; and to choose or refuse contraception. *Where do you stand on Prop 5?*

4

Opponents of safe, legal abortion often speak inaccurately about “abortion up until birth.” That’s simply not how medical care works and simply does not happen. *What will you do in your private and public conversations to combat this disturbing misinformation?*

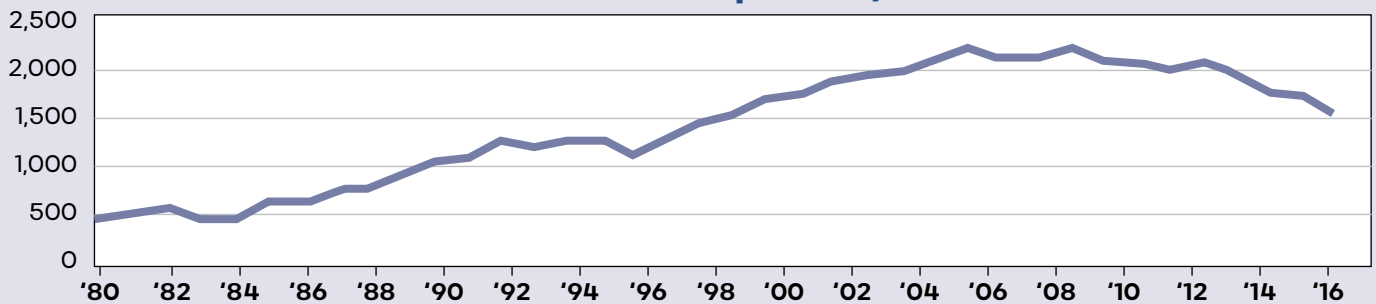
5

The process to amend the Vermont constitution is thoughtful and fair, taking into consideration the weight of any proposed changes to our rights. *What will you do to educate the people in your district about the process to amend the constitution?*

Vermont Needs to Build a Smarter Criminal Justice System.

For too long, Vermont has relied on the criminal justice system as a way to respond to substance-use disorder, mental health conditions, and poverty.

Vermont Incarcerated Population, 1980-2016



We have both the opportunity and a responsibility to eliminate our overreliance on incarceration and address underlying disparities at every point in the system – from someone's first interaction with law enforcement to the moment they return to their communities.

Did You Know?

Vermont's criminal justice system disproportionately impacts:

People of color: The rate of Black adults is seven times higher than White adults in our prisons.

People with disabilities: The national rate of people with disabilities in the criminal justice system is two to six times higher than the general population.

People with mental health conditions: Half of people served by pretrial services have mental health needs.

Low-income people: As of September 2018, 127 people incarcerated were held in Vermont's prisons due to lack of housing and 44% of people being held pretrial were held under conditionals that involved money bail.

Children and families: 6,000 children each year are impacted by having a parent incarcerated, the same number of children born in Vermont each year.

A smarter criminal justice system is...



Equitable



Community-Based



Humanizing



Transparent



Restorative



Invests in People

...supported by 7 in 10 Vermonters.

Vermont has committed to creating a smarter criminal justice system in the past – and it's worked. With continued innovation, we can build on this success.

For more information, contact the ACLU of Vermont (acluvt.org), Disability Rights Vermont (disabilityrightsvt.org), Justice for All (justiceforallvt.org), and Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (vtnetwork.org).

Vermont Needs to Build a Smarter Criminal Justice System

1

After a decade in decline, Vermont's prison population is again increasing, costing taxpayers millions of dollars more each year. *Do you support helping Vermont reduce its prison population by prioritizing smarter criminal justice reforms that only use prisons as a last resort and invest in community-based alternatives?*

2

In a recent poll commissioned by the ACLU of Vermont, two-thirds of Vermont voters said they want to reduce our prison population and increase alternatives to incarceration. *What reforms are you advocating for this year to reduce Vermont's reliance on incarceration?*

3

Our state does not collect and publish the data necessary to understand how to address the racial and geographic disparities in our criminal justice system. *Do you support stronger data reporting requirements from all parts of our criminal justice system?*

4

Police records show that people of color are disproportionately stopped and searched by Vermont law enforcement, and racial disparities in Vermont's prison system are among the worst in the nation. *What do you think Vermont and the legislature should do to address systemic racism in Vermont's criminal justice system?*

5

Vermont is reincarcerating people at the highest rate in the nation. *What do you think Vermont needs to do to stop this revolving door system and to provide people the support they need in their communities?*

When Our Democracy Works for Black Vermonters, It Is a Better Democracy for All Vermonters.

Prohibiting all forms of slavery and indentured servitude in the Vermont Constitution will serve as a foundation for addressing systemic racism in our state's laws and institutions.

From addressing the wealth gap to climate change, a large part of our success will depend upon how we address racial inequality in Vermont. Black people are still disproportionately excluded from systems of social protection and economic uplift while facing shorter lifespan, lower educational attainment and dramatic over criminalization and incarceration compared to their White counterparts.

- 1 in 14 Black men are incarcerated in Vermont
- 50% of Black Vermonters face rental housing discrimination
- Black State employees are three times more likely to be terminated than Whites

We must boldly move forward with an intentional dismantling of racist systems and structures while investing in the freedom and agency of Black people. This includes a constitutional amendment to prohibit slavery and the criminalization of poverty.

A Democracy that works for everyone



What you can do:

Contact your legislator and ask them to amend the constitution to clarify that slavery and indentured servitude in any form are prohibited.

For more information, contact the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance (vtracialjusticealliance.wordpress.com), Justice for All (justiceforallvt.org), ACLU Vermont (acluvt.org), Disability Rights Vermont (disabilityrightsvt.org), Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (vtnetwork.org), Rights and Democracy (radvt.org), and Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund (ppvtaf.org).

When Our Democracy Works for Black Vermonters, It is a Better Democracy for All Vermonters

1

P.R.2 calls to amend the Vermont Constitution to clarify that slavery and indentured servitude in all forms are prohibited. One of the exceptions to the slavery prohibition is if a person is bound by law for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like. Title 13, Chapter 223 states that if one is unable to pay their fine or give sufficient security that “they shall be imprisoned.” *As a lawmaker, what steps are you taking to ensure that poverty is not criminalized in Vermont?*

2

The Vermont Secretary of Administration’s explains the “State’s Strategic Planning (Plan) process” as being “intended to ensure Vermont achieves our 10 Population-Level Outcomes (3 V.S.A. § 2311 (b)) and gubernatorial sub-Outcomes” and describes the outcomes as the “overarching goals for the best Vermont can achieve... [for] our citizenry.” There are Population Level Outcomes prescribed for children, the elderly and those with disabilities. *Should there be population outcomes for African Americans? Why or why not?*

3

The recently appointed Executive Director of Racial Equity is charged with “working with agencies and departments to implement a program of continuing coordination and improvement of activities in State government in order to combat systemic racial disparities” This includes identifying systemic racism in each of the three branches of State government; managing and overseeing the statewide collection of race-based data; developing a model fairness and diversity policy; reviewing and making recommendations regarding the fairness and diversity policies held by all State government systems; gathering relevant existing data and records necessary to carry out the remediation of systemic racial disparities throughout State government; developing performance targets and performance measures; developing and conducting trainings for agencies and departments regarding the nature and scope of systemic racism; and, reporting to the Racial Equity Advisory Panel on progress. This function was established as a single position. *If elected how will this function be in rated in your order of priorities and what if any additional resources would you allocate towards it?*

4

The Human Rights Commission defends the civil liberties of all protected classes in all categories of services. Their caseload is at an all time high, yet they remain significantly understaffed. *As a lawmaker, is this a priority and what will you do to address this matter, if anything?*

5

The 13th amendment to the US constitution states that slavery is prohibited, except for the punishment of a duly convicted crime. Some have suggested that the 13th amendment be repealed and replaced. *If this issue came before the Legislature, what position would you take?*

Working Vermonters Need a Strong Paid Family and Personal Medical Leave Policy.

Universal, inclusive paid family and personal medical leave insurance supports the health and economic security of our children, families, older adults, workers, and small businesses.

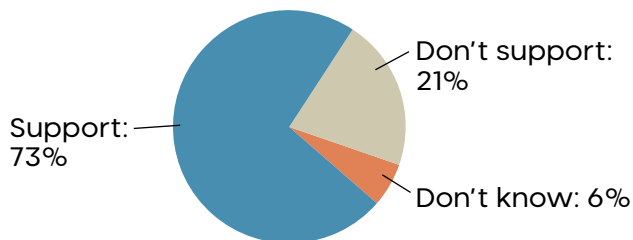
Equity-based fact:

Evidence from states with paid FMLI show that these programs improve workforce attachment and support economic independence, with the greatest effects seen among the most disadvantaged families.

One in four mothers return to work within two weeks of giving birth

Employer impact fact: MSA Survey

In a 2017 survey, Main Street Alliance asked 230 small businesses — both members and not, ***“In general, would you support efforts to establish a state-run, public paid family and medical leave insurance program that would pay for employees to take up to 12 weeks to care for a newborn, a personal illness, or an ill family member?”***



Vermont doesn't need to experiment. Successful programs across the country prove how a universal, public paid family and personal medical leave insurance program improves economic security, helps families

U.S. paid leave policies: getting stronger all the time

	% Wage Reimbursement*	Funded By	# Weeks Family Leave	#Weeks Medical Leave
OR	100%	Employee & Employer	12	12
CT	95%	Employee	12	12
MA	80%	Employee & Employer	12	20
WA	90%	Employee & Employer	12	12
DC	90%	Employer	6/8	2
NY	50% - own health 67% - caregiving	Employee & Employer	12	26
NJ	85%	Employee & Employer	12	26
CA	60-70%	Employee	8	52
RI	60%	Employee	4	30

*wage replacement when current laws fully phased-in; capped at various levels in each state

heal and bond, and evens the playing field for Vermont's small businesses to attract and retain a sustainable workforce.

For more information, contact Main Street Alliance (vermont.mainstreetalliance.org) and Voices for Vermont's Children (voicesforvtkids.org).

Working Vermonters Need a Strong Paid Family and Personal Medical Leave Policy

1

In the last Paid Family and Medical Leave Bill that moved through the legislature, there was only a yearly audit as a form of oversight over a private insurer. *In the next biennium, how will you work to ensure that my public dollars are placed in a public trust and not in the hands of a profit motivated private insurer?*

2

In the last Paid Family and Medical Leave Bill that moved through the legislature, personal disability insurance (TDI) was not a mandatory part of the structure, therefore leaving thousands of Vermonters behind. *In what ways might we address this inequity in the next biennium?*

All Children and Youth Deserve to Live in Supported Families Free from Deprivation.

Vermont needs a strong safety net and an accountable, effective child protection system to counter the unprecedented stress and economic insecurity facing our kids and families today.

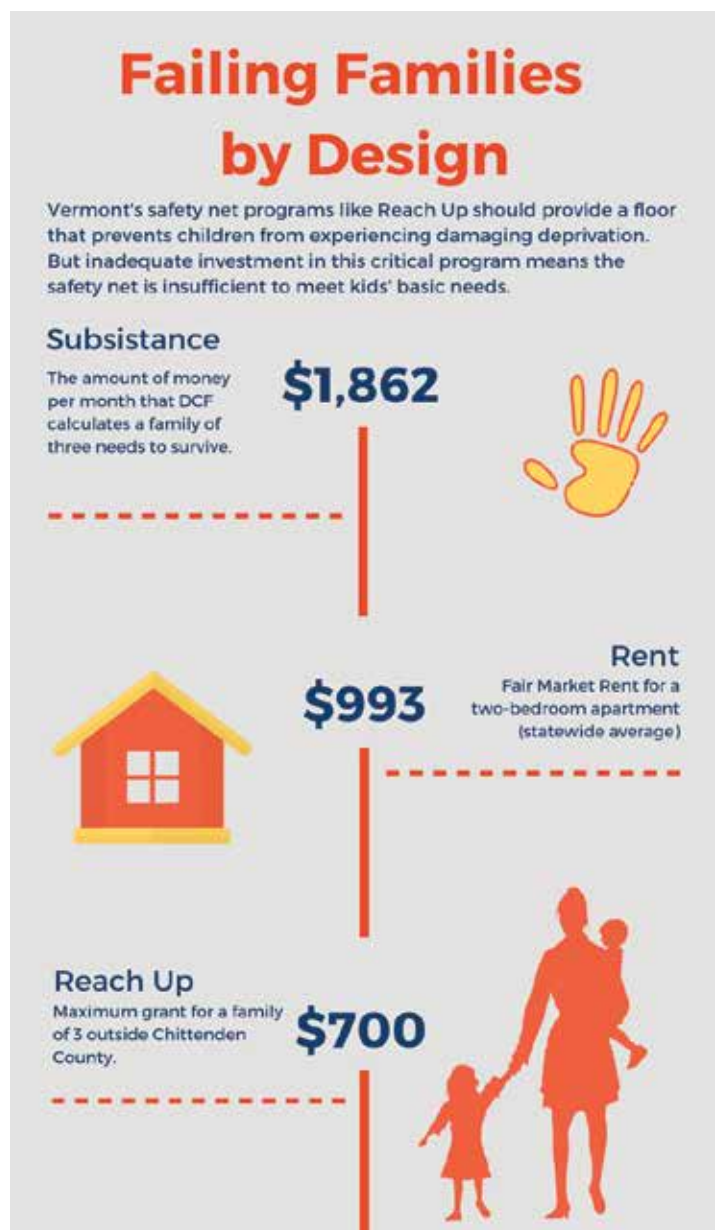
Child poverty carries a heavy human and economic toll

Research shows that kids who grow up in a state of deprivation don't do as well as their peers in affluent families, and even small increases in family income can improve outcomes. In addition, the stress of living in poverty increases the likelihood that families will come in contact with the child protection system.

While Reach Up caseloads have declined in both absolute and relative (share of families in poverty) terms, there's evidence that financial stress is contributing to the dramatic increase in child protection caseloads. A lack of good data from the Department for Children and Families means we don't know the full impact or the most effective way to turn the tide. An Office of Child Advocate would provide needed oversight, analysis, and recommendations for how to strengthen our child protection and safety net systems.

To ensure that kids and youth grow up in well-resourced families, Vermont must enact a sustained, multi-faceted policy approach that:

1. Invests in safety net programs like Reach Up, nutrition, and housing; and
2. Provides independent oversight of the child protection system to ensure that the state is meeting its obligation to center children and support families.



For more information, contact Voices for Vermont's Children (voicesforvtkids.org).

All Children and Youth Deserve to Live in Supported Families Free from Deprivation

1

Despite low unemployment and a fairly strong economy, child poverty rates in Vermont have remained relatively static. More than a third of Vermont kids live in families considered to be low-income (200% poverty level or less), and there are significant disparities between counties. Investments in proven anti-poverty programs have not kept pace with the need. *How are you working to center children in policy decisions and budget for our future?*

2

Poverty alone is not supposed to cause the state to take children into DCF custody, but related conditions like unsuitable housing can prevent family reunification. Yet we have little data about the role that poverty plays in the families involved in Vermont's child protection system. DCF's data systems are ancient and not integrated. *What do you think we should do to ensure that we better understand and effectively address the challenges that undermine family security?*

3

Vermont's child protection system has one of the highest rates of out-of-home placements in the country. NH, with about twice the population, has the same number of kids in care. Vermont is also the only New England state without an independent entity providing oversight and accountability to its child protection system. *Will you support the creation of an Office of the Child Advocate in Vermont so we can restore trust and stability to this critical system?*

Strengthening Community Supports for People with Mental Health Conditions.

People with mental health conditions deserve to live and thrive in our communities, not in locked, segregated institutions.

Let's focus on funding community-based mental health supports rather than expensive hospital beds!

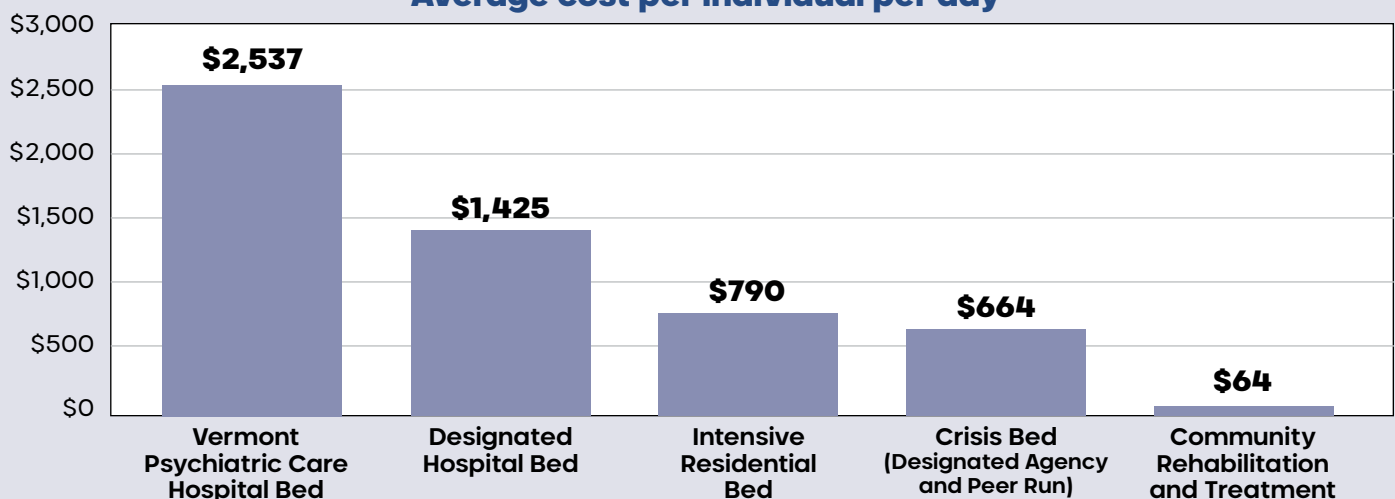
No matter what your ethnic, racial, religious or nationality background is, no matter if you are wealthy or financially vulnerable, if you or someone you know has a mental health condition, recovery and ability to lead a productive, joyful life requires the availability of robust community-based mental health supports and services to avoid unnecessary institutionalization. Approximately 5,000

people are admitted into inpatient psychiatric facilities in Vermont per year.

What can I do to help?

Talk to your family, friends and neighbors with mental health conditions and those that support them to identify the resources they need to live the lives they choose. Then contact your local legislators and ask them to improve resources for our community mental health system to ensure that all Vermonters can access the support they deserve.

Average cost per individual per day



These figures are estimated from the following data sources: Vermont Care Partners 2018 "FY 2018 Outcomes and Data Report" "Narrowing the Gap in Recovery-Oriented Community Services: A presentation by Alyssum, Another Way Community Center, Pathways Vermont, and Vermont Psychiatric Survivors" October 22, 2019; Vermont Department of Mental Health FY2018 Budget Presentation Melissa Bailey, Commissioner

For more information on the benefits of community-based mental health services and how to get involved, contact Disability Rights Vermont (disabilityrightsvt.org), Vermont Care Partners (vermontcarepartners.org), and Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (vcdcr.org).

Strengthening Community Supports for People with Mental Health Conditions

1

All of us, and especially people with mental health conditions, need stable housing, rewarding work, educational opportunity and the support of our peers. And we all agree that there is a crisis in accessing mental health services. Yet our State Government seems intent on building more coercive, restrictive, and expensive inpatient hospital beds and locked facilities. *How will you hold the State accountable to solving the crisis in our mental health system?*

2

People with mental health conditions are often subject to law enforcement uses of force, and sometimes deadly force. Experts agree that having access to highly-trained mental health specialists in the field, working side by side with law enforcement, can reduce tragic and costly outcomes. But still today most communities around the state do not have access to robust Police Social Worker services. And PSWs are often not available to respond in the field because they are busy screening for Emergency Evaluations in Emergency Departments. *What will you do to address the lack of PSW services throughout Vermont?*

3

In our hospitals, residential care facilities, group homes and mental health agencies there is a critical lack of trained staff at every level. High turnover and expensive temporary hires all decrease the quality and access to mental health care in Vermont. *What will you do to determine the level of need for health treatment providers and assure that State Government helps us meet those needs?*

4

Our mental health system uses force to medicate people with some mental health conditions, including restraining them when in hospitals and coercing them in the community under “Orders of Non Hospitalization.” Orders for forced medications have increased dramatically over the last several years, but we don’t have long-term data that demonstrates the effectiveness of forced treatment. *What will you do to make sure our State Government has all the necessary data before making decisions on whether or not continue the practice of forced medication?*

5

Children in Vermont have only one in-state inpatient hospital for mental health treatment, the Brattleboro Retreat. We’ve regularly seen that children with mental health conditions are “boarded” for days in Emergency Departments. *What will you do to ensure that no child has to travel hours and hours away from their home community, or has to languish in an Emergency Department for days, in order to get appropriate mental health treatment?*

