



AFT Vermont 2021-22 Legislative Priorities

Improve Healthcare for All Vermonters

Healthcare is a Human Right. Fulfill the mandate of Act 48, which would make publicly financed, universal healthcare a reality in Vermont. Act 48 commits Vermont to providing healthcare as a public good so that everyone can get the healthcare they need.

Adequate PPE and Safe Staffing. The Covid-19 pandemic has made it clear the need for adequate PPE and safe staffing ratios in all hospitals.

Safe Patient Handling. Technology and OSHA mandated lifting standards have decreased the number of injuries to patients and healthcare professionals. The VA inpatient system and California have banned all manual lifting, and Vermont needs to do the same.

When safe patient handling laws are passed and the programs are actually implemented in health care settings, the results are impressive.... These significant drops in both the number and the severity of injuries yield significant financial savings, too. AMA Journal of Ethics. April 2016, Volume 18, Number 4: 416-421.

Nursing Licensure Compact- While the intent of this compact is good, there is absolutely no evidence to show it is effective in relieving the nursing shortage in any state. The compact only serves to make it easier and cheaper for travel nurses to come to Vermont, while our state would lose the revenue those licenses would provide. It also puts us at risk for losing nurses.

Require Transparency of Salaries and Benefits for Hospital Executives and Administrators. If Vermont is serious about reducing the overall cost of healthcare, it is important to know how much of our healthcare spending goes to pay hospital executives and administrators. Hospitals should be required to disclose this information as part of their budgets that are approved by the Green Mountain Care Board.

Increase Funding for Public Higher Education

Vermont has not always neglected higher education, but state support has consistently been reduced since 1980. In 1980, state appropriations covered 51% of the costs of the VSC. Currently the state funds pay for only 17% of the costs, we believe that at a minimum Vermont should pay 34% of the costs (the National average). The burden of higher education costs has been transferred to Vermont families in the form of increasing tuition. This is creating a generation of adults saddled with overwhelming debt.

There is hereby created as a part of the educational system of the state of Vermont a public corporation to be known as "Vermont State Colleges," which shall plan, supervise, administer, and operate facilities for education above the high school level supported in whole or in substantial part with state funds
-16 V.S.A §2171(a)

Racial Justice

We pledge to prioritize, organize and take direction from organizations who are working to achieve racial justice through legislation, at the statehouse, and action in our communities.

Increase Vermont's minimum wage

Moving to a \$15/hour minimum wage by 2020 will contribute to the overall well-being of our families, communities, businesses and state. It will help boost our economy by attracting young and talented people to the state and by encouraging young families to stay in Vermont.



Restrict public dollars sent to out-of-state colleges & universities & increase affordability for students

- Only 42% Vermont students stayed in-state to attend college their freshman year, compared to 84% nationwide. This is primarily because Vermont underfunds our public institutions of higher education, forcing costs onto students.
- Because of the lack of state support, 40% of Vermont's high school graduates do not immediately enroll in higher education.
- In academic year 2015-16 the state sent \$5.1 million in need-based grant aid out of the state, that's 24.8 percent of total grant aid awarded.
- Vermont is only one of two states that allows these funds to leave the state with no restrictions.
- Only 13 other states and the District of Columbia reported sending *any* need-based aid out of state. In 2015-16, \$11.6 million dollars in need-based aid followed US college students out of their home state to an institution in another state. Vermont supplied just a shade less than half of those dollars.
- Limiting the drain of these funds from Vermont would mean millions of dollars more for Vermont higher education. This would amount to a 7% increase in state funds supporting Vermont higher education institutions- attained without raising a dime of new revenue.

Increase higher education funding to address the nursing shortage

Nursing students in Vermont are being turned away due to nursing faculty shortages

We are already seeing the negative impacts of the nursing shortage which has led to increased moral distress and physical injuries to the nursing staff.



Vermont needs to attract qualified nursing faculty to meet the demand for nursing education.

Ensure rights for public sector workers

Remove barriers to organizing in the public sector (including card-check/majority sign up) to make it easier to sign up members and harder to use public money for union busting.

Institute a statewide family and medical leave insurance program

A statewide family and medical leave insurance program, **paid by**

employers, would give every Vermont worker paid time off to care for a new child or loved one, or to recover from illness. Family and medical leave insurance would promote economic security for women and families, level the playing field for small business and help address the shortage of regulated childcare for infants.



A Green New Deal for Vermont

We believe that climate disaster is real and imminent. Our patients, our students, our families, and our communities will all be impacted negatively, but we can mitigate the damage if we act immediately at the local, state, national and international levels.

