

1 H.65

2 Introduced by Representatives Lippert of Hinesburg, O'Brien of Richmond,

3 Conquest of Newbury, Goodwin of Weston, Grad of Moretown,

4 Keenan of St. Albans City, Marek of Newfane, Miller of

5 Shaftsbury, Waite-Simpson of Essex, and Wizowaty of

6 Burlington

7 Referred to Committee on

8 Date:

9 Subject: Health; regulated drugs; limited immunity from liability for reporting

10 an overdose

11 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to grant limited

12 immunity from liability for:

13 (1) a person who, in good faith, seeks medical assistance for someone who

14 is experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other life-threatening medical

15 emergency; or

16 (2) a person who is experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other

17 life-threatening medical emergency and, in good faith, seeks medical

18 assistance for himself or herself or is the subject of a good faith request for

19 medical assistance.

1 An act relating to limited immunity from liability for reporting a drug or
2 alcohol overdose

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

4 Sec. 1. INTENT

5 It is the intent of the General Assembly to encourage a witness or victim of
6 a drug- or alcohol-related overdose to seek medical assistance in order to save
7 the life of an overdose victim by establishing a state policy of protecting the
8 witness or victim from prosecution and conviction for certain drug- and
9 alcohol-related crimes.

10 Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. chapter 84, subchapter 3, which shall include §§ 4249–4254,
11 is added to read:

Subchapter 3. Miscellaneous

* * *

§ 4254. IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY

15 (a) As used in this section:

16 (1) “Drug or alcohol overdose” means an acute condition, including
17 physical illness, coma, mania, hysteria, or death resulting from the
18 consumption or use of a regulated drug or alcohol, which a layperson would
19 reasonably believe to be a drug or alcohol overdose that requires medical
20 assistance.

21 (2) “Medical assistance” means professional services provided to a
22 person experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose by a health care professional

1 licensed, registered, or certified under state law who, acting within his or her
2 lawful scope of practice, may provide diagnosis, treatment, or emergency
3 services for a person experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose.

4 (b) A person who, in good faith, seeks medical assistance for someone who
5 is experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other life-threatening medical
6 emergency shall not be cited, arrested, or prosecuted for possessing,
7 dispensing, or being under the influence of a drug under this chapter or cited,
8 arrested, or prosecuted for possession of alcohol by someone under age 21
9 pursuant to 7 V.S.A §§ 656 and 657 or for providing to or enabling
10 consumption of alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A.
11 § 658(a)–(c).

12 (c) A person who is experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other
13 life-threatening medical emergency and, in good faith, seeks medical
14 assistance for himself or herself or is the subject of a good faith request for
15 medical assistance shall not be cited, arrested, or prosecuted for possessing,
16 dispensing, or being under the influence of a drug under this chapter or cited,
17 arrested, or prosecuted for possession of alcohol by someone under age 21
18 pursuant to 7 V.S.A. §§ 656 and 657 or for providing to or enabling
19 consumption of alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A.
20 § 658(a)–(c).

1 (d) A person who seeks medical assistance for a drug or alcohol overdose
2 or other life-threatening medical emergency pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of
3 this section shall not be subject to any of the penalties for violation of a
4 restraining order for possessing, dispensing, or being under the influence of a
5 drug or alcohol, for being at the scene of the drug or alcohol overdose, or for
6 being within close proximity to any person at the scene of the drug or
7 alcohol overdose.

8 (e) A person who seeks medical assistance for a drug or alcohol overdose
9 or other life-threatening medical emergency pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of
10 this section shall not be subject to any sanction for a violation of a condition of
11 probation or parole for possessing, dispensing, or being under the influence of
12 a drug or alcohol.

13 (f)(1) A defendant may assert an affirmative defense to a charge of selling
14 or dispensing a regulated drug with death resulting under section 4250 of this
15 title if the defendant, in good faith, sought medical assistance for the deceased.

16 (2) A defendant may assert an affirmative defense to a charge of
17 criminal sale of a regulated drug if the prosecution relies on evidence obtained
18 as a result of the defendant, in good faith, seeking medical assistance for
19 someone, including himself or herself, experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose
20 or other life-threatening medical emergency or if the defendant was the subject
21 of a good faith request for health care. The affirmative defense shall not apply

1 to offenses charged under subsection 4237(c) of this title (dispensing or selling
2 on school grounds or abutting property).

3 (g) The act of seeking medical assistance for or by someone who is
4 experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other life-threatening medical
5 emergency shall be considered a mitigating circumstance at sentencing for a
6 violation of any other offense defined in this chapter.

7 (h) A person shall qualify for the immunity from liability provided in this
8 section only if the evidence for prosecution was gained as a result of the person
9 seeking medical assistance for a drug or alcohol overdose or other
10 life-threatening medical emergency.

11 (i) A person who seeks medical assistance for a drug or alcohol overdose or
12 other life-threatening medical emergency pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of
13 this section shall not be subject to the provisions of subchapter 2 of this chapter
14 concerning property subject to forfeiture except that prima facie contraband
15 shall be subject to forfeiture.

16 (j) Nothing in this section shall be construed to bar the admissibility of any
17 evidence in connection with the investigation and prosecution of a crime with
18 regard to another defendant who does not independently qualify for protections
19 set forth in this section; nor with regard to other crimes committed by a person
20 who otherwise qualifies under this section; nor shall anything in this section be
21 construed to bar any seizure pursuant to law.

1 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

2 This act shall take effect on passage and shall apply only to a person who
3 seeks medical assistance for another in accordance with 18 V.S.A. § 4254(a) or
4 (b) on or after the date of passage.