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H.275

Introduced by Representatives Lippert of Hinesburg, Conquest of Newbury,
and Strong of Albany

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Human services; substance abuse treatment; emergency
buprenorphine

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require that
the Department of Health ensure emergency buprenorphine be available within
24 hours when requested by a Vermont resident meeting the medication-
assisted treatment (MAT) criteria who is unable to access MAT within that
time frame.

An act relating to access to emergency buprenorphine

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

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Vermonters are experiencing the devastating effects of the national
opioid crisis in their families and communities;

1 (2) medication-assisted treatment (MAT) with methadone or
2 buprenorphine has been identified as the most effective treatment for opioid
3 use disorder by State and national experts;

4 (3) hundreds of Vermonters in need of MAT are unable to access MAT
5 due to lack of available treatment slots within Vermont's opioid treatment
6 system;

7 (4) in recent years, waiting lists for access to MAT for many individuals
8 have ranged from a period of months to up to two years;

9 (5) many Vermonters have died of fatal drug overdose, lost custody of
10 their children, lost their freedom to incarceration, become homeless, become
11 infected with HIV or hepatitis C, or have suffered other devastating harm while
12 on MAT waiting lists;

13 (6) many communities have faced increases in burglaries and other
14 crimes, child abuse and neglect, homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, and
15 other problems associated with untreated opioid addictions;

16 (7) MAT waiting lists have persisted for over 15 years in Vermont in
17 spite of heroic efforts to expand MAT access via the State's opioid treatment
18 system;

19 (8) rates of fatal drug overdoses have sharply risen in recent years, and
20 Vermonters are losing members of their communities to fatal drug overdose at
21 the rate of two or more people a week; and

1 (9) the right to have timely access to life-saving medication is consistent
2 with our values as Vermonters.

3 Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 4754 is added to read:

4 § 4754. EMERGENCY ACCESS TO BUPRENORPHINE

5 The Department of Health shall ensure that emergency, low-barrier access
6 to buprenorphine is provided to any resident meeting the criteria for
7 medication-assisted treatment (MAT) who is unable to access MAT through
8 the State's opioid addiction treatment system within 24 hours of requesting
9 treatment. Emergency access to buprenorphine under this section shall be
10 provided within 24 hours of requesting treatment and shall continue until MAT
11 is available through the State's opioid addiction treatment system.

12 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

13 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2017.