

No. 71. An act relating to limited immunity from liability for reporting a drug or alcohol overdose.

(H.65)

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

Sec. 1. INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to encourage a witness or victim of a drug overdose to seek medical assistance in order to save the life of an overdose victim by establishing a state policy of protecting the witness or victim from prosecution and conviction for certain crimes. It is not the intent of the General Assembly to provide immunity from citation, arrest or prosecution for violation of 18 V.S.A. chapter 84 or citation, arrest, or prosecution for procuring, possessing, or consuming alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A §§ 656 and 657 or for providing to or enabling consumption of alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 658(a)–(c) in cases where medical assistance has not been sought for someone experiencing an overdose.

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

Subchapter 3. Miscellaneous

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§ 4254. IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Drug overdose” means an acute condition resulting from or believed to be resulting from the use of a regulated drug which a layperson

would reasonably believe requires medical assistance. For purposes of this section, “regulated drug” shall include alcohol.

(2) “Medical assistance” means professional services provided to a person experiencing a drug overdose by a health care professional licensed, registered, or certified under state law who, acting within his or her lawful scope of practice, may provide diagnosis, treatment, or emergency services for a person experiencing a drug overdose.

(3) “Seeks medical assistance” shall include providing care to someone who is experiencing a drug overdose while awaiting the arrival of medical assistance to aid the overdose victim.

(b) A person who, in good faith and in a timely manner, seeks medical assistance for someone who is experiencing a drug overdose shall not be cited, arrested, or prosecuted for a violation of this chapter or cited, arrested, or prosecuted for procuring, possessing, or consuming alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A. §§ 656 and 657 or for providing to or enabling consumption of alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 658(a)–(c).

(c) A person who is experiencing a drug overdose and, in good faith, seeks medical assistance for himself or herself or is the subject of a good faith request for medical assistance shall not be cited, arrested, or prosecuted for a violation of this chapter or cited, arrested, or prosecuted for procuring, possessing, or consuming alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to

7 V.S.A. §§ 656 and 657 or for providing to or enabling consumption of alcohol by someone under age 21 pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 658(a)–(c).

(d) A person who seeks medical assistance for a drug overdose pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall not be subject to any of the penalties for violation of 13 V.S.A. § 1030 (violation of a protection order), for a violation of this chapter or 7 V.S.A §§ 656 and 657, for being at the scene of the drug overdose, or for being within close proximity to any person at the scene of the drug overdose.

(e) A person who seeks medical assistance for a drug overdose pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall not be subject to any sanction for a violation of a condition of pretrial release, probation, furlough, or parole for a violation of this chapter or 7 V.S.A §§ 656 and 657, for being at the scene of the drug overdose, or for being within close proximity to any person at the scene of the drug overdose.

(f) The act of seeking medical assistance for or by someone who is experiencing a drug overdose shall be considered a mitigating circumstance at sentencing for a violation of any other offense.

(g) The immunity provisions of this section apply only to the use and derivative use of evidence gained as a proximate result of the person's seeking medical assistance for a drug overdose, and do not preclude prosecution of the person on the basis of evidence obtained from an independent source.

(h) A person who seeks medical assistance for a drug overdose pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall not be subject to the provisions of subchapter 2 of this chapter concerning property subject to forfeiture, except that prima facie contraband shall be subject to forfeiture.

(i) Except in cases of reckless or intentional misconduct, law enforcement shall be immune from liability for citing or arresting a person who is later determined to qualify for immunity under this section.

Sec. 2a. REPORT

The Executive Director of the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs and the Defender General shall each report to the Senate and House Committees on Judiciary on the implementation and effect of Sec. 2 of this act no later than November 2015.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage and shall apply only to a person who seeks medical assistance for a drug overdose in accordance with 18 V.S.A. § 4254 on or after the date of passage.

Date the Governor signed the bill: June 5, 2013