

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to which was  
3 referred Senate Bill No. 30 entitled “An act relating to creating a Sister State  
4 Program” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends  
5 that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out all  
6 after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM; WORKING GROUP

8 (a) Creation. There is created the Vermont Sister State Program Working  
9 Group for the purpose of determining the administration, oversight, scope, and  
10 objectives of a Vermont Sister State Program.

11 (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following  
12 members:

13 (1) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or  
14 designee;

15 (2) the Secretary of Education or designee;

16 (3) the Secretary of Agriculture or designee;

17 (4) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council or  
18 designee of the Board of the Trustees;

19 (5) the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Vermont Council on  
20 World Affairs or designee of the Board of the Directors; and

21 (6) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee.

1           (c) Meetings.

2                   (1) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or  
3           designee shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur on or  
4           before September 1, 2024.

5                   (2) The Working Group shall select a chair from among its members at  
6           the first meeting.

7                   (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

8                   (4) In furtherance of its duties, the Working Group is encouraged to  
9           solicit input and participation from interested stakeholders, including those  
10          with experience in cultural exchange or in international relations, agriculture,  
11          trade, education, arts, recreation, or governance.

12           (d) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall review sister state  
13          programs in other jurisdictions and receive testimony from relevant  
14          stakeholders in order to make recommendations for legislative action. In  
15          conducting its analysis, the Working Group shall consider and make  
16          recommendations on the following:

17                   (1) which department in State government is best suited to administer,  
18          house, and provide support to the Program;

19                   (2) the makeup of the membership of the Committee overseeing the  
20          Program;

21                   (3) sources of funding that will financially support the Program;

1           (4) specific objectives of the Program that align with the following  
2 goals:

3           (A) that the Program exist to create, administer, and maintain  
4 mutually beneficial and long-lasting partnerships between Vermont and other  
5 select countries or provinces;

6           (B) that the Program foster the connection of immigrants and refugee  
7 communities in Vermont with their nations of origin;

8           (C) that the Program promote and foster cultural exchange, tourism,  
9 trade, and education between Vermont and Sister States; and

10           (D) that through the Program, the Committee communicate with and  
11 support military personnel, foreign service officers, aid organizations,  
12 nongovernmental organizations, Peace Corps volunteers, and any other  
13 relevant entities working in Sister States.

14           (5) the criteria for evaluating proposed and existing Sister State  
15 agreements;

16           (6) the requirements for creating and managing Sister State agreements,  
17 including:

18           (A) the term length for agreements; and

19           (B) the appropriate number of active agreements at one time; and

20           (7) any other issue the Working Group deems relevant to the success of  
21 the Vermont Sister State Program.

1           (e) Compensation and reimbursement.

2                   (1) A nonlegislative member of the Working Group shall be entitled to  
3 per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under  
4 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings.

5                   (2) Payments to members of the Working Group authorized under this  
6 subsection shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

7           (f) Reporting.

8                   (1) An initial report on the Working Group’s progress on the work set  
9 forth in this section shall be submitted to the General Assembly on or before  
10 February 15, 2025.

11                   (2) A final report shall include the Working Group’s findings and  
12 recommendations for legislative language based on the requirements set forth  
13 in this section. The report shall also include the names of the stakeholders that  
14 the Working Group heard from during its work. The report shall be submitted  
15 to the General Assembly on or before November 1, 2025.

16           (g) Expiration. The Working Group shall cease to exist on March 31,  
17 2026.

18           Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

19           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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(Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_

Representative \_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE COMMITTEE