



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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MEMORANDUM

To: Rep Diane Lanpher, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Rep. Peter Conlon, Chair, House Committee on Education
Date: March 3, 2023
Subject: Provisions in the Governor's Proposed FY 2024 Budget

The House Education Committee has reviewed the proposed Agency of Education budget and has no changes to recommend for the day-to-day operating budget of AOE. The committee does, however, review grants flowing through the Agency and provides the following input.

Every organization the AOE funds is not just worthy, and worthy for an increase from years of little to no increases, but all contribute to helping solve some of Vermont's most vexing problems.

The following is HEC's comments on grant programs from the Agency of Education in order of priority as discussed by the House Education Committee, as well as further commentary on other budget issues.

ADULT EDUCATION

The state's adult education programs are seeking \$1.5 million increase in the base funding of \$3.5 million. HEC recognizes that this is a large increase that probably cannot be fully funded in the FY budget or ongoing thereafter, but this rose as a top priority for the committee for a needed increase. Adult Education provides a crucial service, but even more so as the state's workforce shortages grow to a crisis point. AE serves adults who seek to improve their education, and their opportunities. AE students are Vermonters who are very likely to stay in Vermont, working in some of the neediest areas. AE services are crucial to the New American community, especially in language acquisition. While the need for AE services has grown, their budget has not come close to keeping up with the cost to provide the educational services, with the four AE programs falling woefully behind in salary and benefits, and more so in modernizing its technology.

OUTRIGHT VERMONT

(Formal request testimony set for week of March 13)

Outright Vermont's modest level funding of \$60,000 is holding the program back from serving more LGBTQ school-age Vermonters at time when the need is greatest. It is no exaggeration to say that Outright Vermont's work saves lives in a population prone to self-harm and suicide. We strongly feel that their request for \$200,000 is worthy and long overdue. Outright Vermont wants to expand its reach to more schools throughout the state with effective and inexpensive programming to this vulnerable population. The funding would continue its current programming (\$60K), cover a budget gap (\$60K) and hire an additional education team member to reach more schools (\$80K).

GOVERNOR'S INSTITUTE

The Governor's Institutes of Vermont continues to offer high school students a high-quality experience each summer and has proven so popular it is having to turn down the attendance of many Vermont students who want to participate. The program brings together students from all walks of life to spend a week on a college campus and focus in a certain area, including programs in career areas so needed by our state, such as health care and emergency services.

The program also exposes many Vermont students to life on a college campus at a time when many are deciding if college is for them. Moreover, these VT college-based programs provide a revenue source for these colleges, often a state college.

The committee supports GIV's ask for a significant increase in its base funding. While the \$385,308 request may not be possible, we emphasize that this program has seen level funding for far too long, and its reach and impact needs to be available to more Vermonters.

SNELLING CENTER, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Snelling Center's request for \$130,000 to restart its Early Childhood Educational Leadership program is timely as the state continues to focus on supporting our early ed system. This high-quality program brings together leaders in this field for training, but more importantly, to build their coalition for peer support and growth. The program was previously funded by a federal grant, then discontinued during Covid. We agree that this program is of high value and timely, and we encourage funding it if possible.

OTHERS:

MENTOR VERMONT

The funding for Mentor Vermont is not part of the Agency of Education budget, but HEC would like to provide its strong support for this program and an increase in its funding. At a time when student mental health needs have soared, the evidence about the very positive impact of a meaningful adult in a youth's life is clear. Mentor Vermont

coordinates programs that makes this happen in a cost-effective, systematic way, while supporting ongoing relationships that make true differences in the lives of youth.

LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING INCENTIVE

We understand this was inadvertently left out of the Governor's budget. We support its return, but would ask if the AOE budget is the best source of this funding rather than Agriculture if requests are to continue after the FY24 one-time funding. We support ongoing funding for this program.

CCV TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This \$10 million ask from the governor's budget was not presented to the HEC, however we are aware that HAC has taken testimony and we respect the information you have gathered and leave the funding decision to you. However, we would point out that students from families with under \$75,000 in household income essentially qualify for free tuition at CCV, and students can also attend for free through dual enrollment and early college. Therefore, we ask that HAC considers alternate ways of using this money to assist Vermonters attending our state college system.

COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL OF VERMONT

The House Education Committee opposes the administration's proposal to move funding for Community High School of Vermont to the Education Fund. CHS was moved to the General Fund when the GF transfer was eliminated in order to have the Education Fund better represent what it was designed for: funding VT's pre-K-12 system. CHS is a Corrections program and serves an entirely different population and should remain in the General Fund and as a program of Corrections.