

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to which was
3 referred House Bill No. 484 entitled “An act relating to enhancing workforce
4 and economic development opportunities” respectfully reports that it has
5 considered the same and recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

6 * * * Education Workforce * * *

7 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 6 is added to read:

8 Subchapter 6. Forgivable Loan Incentive Programs

9 § 2871. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

10 PROGRAM

11 (a) As used in this section:

12 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
13 established in section 2821 of this title.

14 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
15 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

16 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
17 institution as defined under section 2822 of this title.

18 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
19 tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of required books
20 and supplies for up to full-time attendance in an undergraduate or graduate
21 program at an eligible school.

1 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive
2 Program created under this section.

3 (b) The Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created
4 and shall be administered by the Corporation. The Program provides
5 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to
6 working as a teacher in a Vermont public school and who meet the eligibility
7 requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The intent of the Program is to
8 encourage students to enter into teaching professions, with an emphasis on
9 encouraging Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters, New
10 Americans, and other historically underrepresented communities in an effort to
11 diversify the educator workforce.

12 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
13 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
14 General Assembly for this purpose.

15 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
16 whether a resident or nonresident of Vermont, shall satisfy all of the following
17 requirements:

18 (1) be enrolled in teaching program at an eligible school;

19 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
20 is enrolled;

1 (3) agree to work as a teacher in Vermont employed directly by a public
2 school located in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for
3 each year of forgivable loan awarded;

4 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
5 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
6 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
7 service required in this subsection;

8 (5) have completed the Program’s application form, the Free
9 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and for Vermont residents, the
10 Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance
11 with a schedule determined by the Corporation; and

12 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
13 require.

14 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a teacher in a Vermont public
15 school for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan
16 benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by
17 the Corporation, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness
18 for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit
19 agreement or promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering
20 the Program.

1 (f) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this
2 section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds
3 are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over
4 and shall be available to the Corporation in the following fiscal year to award
5 additional forgivable loans as set forth in this section.

6 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
7 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
8 forgivable loan amounts. The Corporation shall not use more than seven
9 percent of the funds appropriated for the Program for its costs of
10 administration and may recoup its reasonable costs of collecting the forgivable
11 loans in repayment.

12 Sec. 2. EMERGING PATHWAYS TO TEACHING; REPORT

13 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to encourage and support the
14 development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators. To
15 combat the growing educator shortage throughout the State and meet the needs
16 of Vermont students, it is necessary to invest in nontraditional educator
17 training programs.

18 (b) Grant program.

19 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2024, there is established the
20 Emerging Pathways Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of
21 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional

1 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of
2 Education’s emerging pathways, including peer review and apprentice
3 pathways, with the goal of increased program completion rates and increased
4 rates of licensure of underrepresented demographics.

5 (2) Program administration. The Agency shall adopt policies,
6 procedures, and guidelines necessary for implementation of the Program
7 described in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

8 (3) Eligibility criteria. The Agency shall issue grants to organizations,
9 school districts, or a group of school districts for the development and
10 administration of programs and program coordinators designed to provide
11 prospective educators in emerging pathways to teaching with the support
12 necessary for successful entry into the educator workforce. Recruitment,
13 support, and retention of prospective educator candidates shall focus on
14 diversity, equity, and inclusion. Support provided through the Program may
15 include:

16 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

17 (B) local, educator-led seminars designed around the Vermont
18 licensure portfolio themes;

19 (C) local educator mentors;

20 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
21 process; and

1 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
2 of licensure.

3 (4) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Agency of Education
4 shall report to the Senate and House Committees on Education on the status of
5 the implementation of the Emerging Pathways Grant Program and a summary
6 and performance review of the programs to which grants were awarded. The
7 report shall include any metrics used in the performance review, the number of
8 program participants, endorsement areas of participants, feedback from
9 participants and mentors, and any recommendation for legislative action.

10 Sec. 3. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

11 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, peer review
12 process one-time licensure fee requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a)(7) are
13 suspended during fiscal years 2024–2029.

14 (b) In fiscal year 2024, the estimated fees that would have been collected
15 under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a)(7) shall be accounted for through funds
16 appropriated to the Agency of Education from the General Fund.

17 Sec. 4. EDUCATION WORKFORCE; APPROPRIATIONS

18 (a) Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), in fiscal year 2024 the amount of
19 \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of
20 Education for the purpose of funding the Emerging Pathways Grant Program
21 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

1 (b) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from
2 the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the
3 Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 16 V.S.A.
4 § 2871.

5 Sec. 5. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

6 (a) Educator demographics. In order to understand and improve the
7 longstanding and well-documented issue of underrepresentation in the
8 Vermont educator workforce, including underrepresentation of Black,
9 Indigenous, and Persons of Color; New Americans; and other historically
10 underrepresented communities, the Agency of Education shall collect
11 demographic information from educators and report such information in its
12 annual teacher and staff full-time equivalencies report. The Agency shall
13 submit the educator demographic information section of the report annually to
14 the General Assembly on or before each January 15.

15 (b) Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant
16 Program.

17 (1) There is created the Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity
18 Groups Grant Program for the purpose of providing grants for the support of
19 existing and the development of new educator affinity groups for historically
20 underrepresented groups. The Agency of Education shall administer the
21 Program.

1 Institutions about the progress and effectiveness of its professional
2 development initiative. The Department shall make management, supervisory,
3 and frontline staff available to testify.

4 (d) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 General Fund to the Department of Corrections for the purpose of contracting
6 or expanding an existing contract with a vendor to provide supervisory and
7 management professional development services to the Department’s
8 employees in accordance with the Department’s efforts to address an employee
9 workforce crisis and strengthen workplace satisfaction.

10 Sec. 7. 28 V.S.A. § 126 is added to read:

11 § 126. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM;

12 CONFIDENTIALITY

13 (a) As used in this section:

14 (1) “Department” has the same meaning as in subdivision 3(4) of this
15 title.

16 (2) “Participant” means a Department staff member who has been
17 involved in a traumatic incident by reason of employment at the Department
18 and who has agreed to participate in the Department’s peer support program.

19 (3) “Peer support” means appropriate support and services offered by a
20 peer support specialist to a participant.

1 (4) “Peer support program” means a program established by the
2 Department of Corrections to provide appropriate peer support services to
3 Department staff members.

4 (5) “Peer support session” means a peer support program session for a
5 Department staff member who has been involved in a traumatic incident by
6 reason of employment at the Department or related to other personal matters.

7 (6) “Peer support specialist” means a Department staff member who, by
8 reason of the staff member’s prior experience, training, or interest, has
9 expressed a desire and has been selected to provide appropriate peer support
10 services to a participant.

11 (7) “Staff member” means a supervising officer as defined in
12 subdivision 3(9) of this title, a correctional officer as defined in subdivision
13 3(10) of this title, and any other employee of the Department.

14 (b)(1) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, any
15 communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer
16 support session of the peer support program, including any oral or written
17 information conveyed during a peer support session, shall not be disclosed by
18 any individual participating in the peer support session.

19 (2) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any
20 communication relating to a peer support session between peer support
21 specialists, between peer support specialists and participants of the peer

1 support program, between participants of the peer support program, or between
2 any other Department staff member, including any oral or written information,
3 shall not be disclosed by any individual participating in the communication.

4 (3) Written communications described in this subsection, such as notes,
5 records, and reports related to a peer support session, are exempt from public
6 inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept
7 confidential. The Public Records Act exemptions created in this section shall
8 not be subject to the provisions of 1 V.S.A. § 317(e) (repeal of Public Records
9 Act exemptions).

10 (c) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any
11 communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer
12 support session, including any oral or written communication, such as notes,
13 records, and reports related to the peer support session, shall not be admissible
14 in a judicial, administrative, or arbitration proceeding. Limitations on
15 disclosure imposed by this subsection include disclosure during any discovery
16 conducted as part of an adjudicatory proceeding. Limitations on disclosure
17 imposed by this subsection shall not include knowledge acquired by the
18 Department or staff members from observations made during the course of
19 employment or information acquired by the by the Department or staff
20 members during the course of employment that is otherwise subject to
21 discovery or introduction into evidence.

1 (d)(1) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of
2 this section shall only apply to a peer support session conducted by an
3 individual who has:

4 (A) been designated by the Department or the peer support program
5 to act as a peer support specialist; and

6 (B) received and completed training in peer support and providing
7 emotional and moral support to Department staff members who have been
8 involved in emotionally traumatic incidents by reason of their employment or
9 other personal matters.

10 (2) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of
11 this section shall not apply to the following information as it pertains to an
12 individual designated to receive such information in the normal course the
13 individual’s professional responsibilities:

14 (A) any threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant of a peer
15 support session or any information conveyed in a peer support session relating
16 to a threat of suicide or homicide;

17 (B) any information relating to the abuse of a child or vulnerable
18 adult, or other information that is required to be reported by law;

19 (C) any admission of criminal conduct; or

20 (D) any admission of a plan to commit a crime.

1 (e) Nothing in this section shall prohibit any communications between peer
2 support specialists regarding a peer support session or between peer support
3 specialists and participants of the peer support program.

4 (f)(1) The Department shall not be liable for any disclosure made in
5 violation of this section by an a peer support specialist or participant who
6 participates in a peer support session.

7 (2) A peer support specialist who in good faith provides appropriate peer
8 support services to a participant of the peer support program shall be immune
9 from criminal or civil liability for any injury to the participant unless the peer
10 support specialist’s conduct constitutes gross negligence, recklessness, or
11 intentional misconduct.

12 * * * Young Adult Workforce * * *

13 Sec. 8. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM;

14 APPROPRIATION

15 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated from the
16 General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to continue
17 funding through the pilot project the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program,
18 which supports workforce development goals through creating meaningful
19 paid service and learning opportunities for young adults, through the Serve,
20 Learn, and Earn Partnership made up of the Vermont Youth Conservation
21 Corps, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Works for Women, and Resource VT.

1 The Department shall enter into a grant agreement with the Partnership that
2 specifies the required services and outcomes for the Program.

3 * * * Adult Learning * * *

4 Sec. 9. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to the Agency of Education for adult learning services.

7 * * * Climate Workforce * * *

8 Sec. 10. CLIMATE WORKFORCE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN;

9 ADVANCE VERMONT: APPROPRIATION

10 (a) Advance Vermont shall create a climate workforce-focused public
11 education campaign that engages current and prospective employees, Vermont
12 youth, adults interested in changing careers, and individuals yet to earn a
13 postsecondary credential, or those who are looking to upskill.

14 (b) The campaign shall include:

15 (1) targeted external communications to support awareness of climate
16 pathways in Vermont, including partnership and collaboration with direct
17 service organizations;

18 (2) engagement through workshops, webinars, and trainings;

19 (3) information about climate sector career and education pathways
20 through centralized and easy to access resources, such as MyFutureVT.org and
21 other websites and applications; and

1 (4) video series and other media featuring opportunities with employers
2 and employee success stories.

3 (d) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a subgrant to
5 Advance Vermont to implement this section.

6 Sec. 11. VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND;

7 BUSINESS COACHING; APPROPRIATION

8 (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$60,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
10 subgrant to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to expand its Business
11 Coaching program to work with a group of existing energy services businesses
12 interested in adopting a climate-centered mission and working with trades
13 persons looking to start their own climate-centered business.

14 (b) The Fund shall recruit a cohort of up to twelve existing companies and
15 a cohort of up to twelve trained tradespeople to receive advanced business
16 assistance to enable them to either pivot their existing business or start a new
17 business that will expand the State’s ability to deploy renewable energy and
18 efficiency technologies to more homes and businesses across the State.

19 * * * Higher Education; Workforce Investments; Curricula Expansion * * *

20 Sec. 12. UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT; OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT;

21 APPROPRIATION

1 Sec. 15. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CERTIFICATE IN 3-D
2 TECHNOLOGY; APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to establish a Certificate in 3-D
5 Technology program offered as a full-time, six-week, intensive residential
6 summer program at Vermont State University, which will:

7 (1) offer knowledge and hands-on experience that appeals to a wide
8 range of interests from science and engineering to the arts and humanities;

9 (2) position students for greater success in college and with an
10 employable edge upon completion;

11 (3) attract diverse types of learners from high schools and CTE centers;

12 (4) foster interest in STE(A)M with learners across different disciplines;

13 (5) leverage the latest 3-D technology available at the Advanced
14 Manufacturing Center; and

15 (6) build local and national awareness of the Vermont State College
16 System’s innovative, experiential learning methodology and technical
17 expertise.

18 Sec. 16. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CRITICAL
19 OCCUPATIONS SCHOLARSHIPS; APPROPRIATION

20 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,800,000.00 is appropriated from the
21 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to provide Critical Occupations

1 Scholarships for eligible students with a household income of \$75,000.00 or
2 less enrolled education programs that lead to a career in an occupation with
3 critical need, including early childhood occupations, clinical mental health
4 counseling, criminal justice occupations, dental hygienists, and all levels of
5 nursing.

6 Sec. 17. UPSKILL VERMONT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

7 APPROPRIATION

8 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 General Fund to the University of Vermont to provide additional free classes
10 through the Upskill Vermont Scholarship Program for Vermont residents
11 seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance job skills.

12 * * * Vermont Trades Scholarship Program * * *

13 Sec. 18. VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

14 APPROPRIATION

15 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
16 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to provide
17 additional scholarships through the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program
18 created in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 14.

19 * * * Vermont Training Program * * *

20 Sec. 19. VERMONT TRAINING PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

1 practitioner in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in
2 subsection (d) of this section.

3 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
4 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
5 General Assembly for this purpose.

6 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
7 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
8 requirements:

9 (1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program, whether through in-
10 person or remote instruction, that leads to a master's degree or specialty in
11 psychiatric mental health;

12 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
13 is enrolled;

14 (3) agree to work as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner in
15 Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of
16 forgivable loan awarded;

17 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
18 the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
19 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
20 service required in subdivision (3) of this subsection;

1 (5) have completed the Program’s application form and the Free
2 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), in accordance with a schedule
3 determined by the Corporation; and

4 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
5 require.

6 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a psychiatric mental health
7 nurse practitioner in this State in compliance with the Program for a period that
8 would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the
9 individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in
10 consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall
11 receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant
12 to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the
13 individual at the time of entering the Program.

14 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
15 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
16 forgivable loan amounts.

17 Sec. 23. PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER

18 FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM;

19 APPROPRIATION

20 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
21 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont

1 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive

2 Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 39.

3 Sec. 24. EMS TRAINING; APPROPRIATION

4 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 General Fund to the Department of Health to provide training for emergency
6 medical services personnel.

7 Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
8 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024, the following amounts are appropriated for forgivable
10 loans for nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan
11 Incentive Program established in 18 V.S.A. § 34:

12 (1) the amount of \$3,000,000.00 in Global Commitment funds is
13 appropriated to the Department of Health for forgivable loans for nursing
14 students under the Program;

15 (2) the amount of \$1,304,400.00 is appropriated from the General Fund
16 to the Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
17 State match for the Program; and

18 (3) the amount of \$1,695,600.00 in federal funds is appropriated to the
19 Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
20 Program.

1 Sec. 26. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;

2 APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to provide one additional year
5 of funding for the classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce
6 Coordinator position created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of
7 Health Care Reform, pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 34(a).

8 ~~Sec. 27. 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 29e is amended to read:~~

9 ~~Sec. 29e. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED~~

10 ~~AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE~~

11 ~~DEVELOPMENT~~

12 ~~(a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from~~
13 ~~the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) — Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery~~
14 ~~Funds to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the designated and~~
15 ~~specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency's proportion of~~
16 ~~full-time equivalent (FTE) mental health and substance use disorder treatment~~
17 ~~staff to the total number of FTE mental health and substance use disorder~~
18 ~~treatment staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide.~~
19 ~~The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan~~
20 ~~repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of~~
21 ~~high-quality staff to support access to services mental health and substance use~~

1 ~~disorder treatment professionals available to Vermont residents in need of their~~
2 ~~services, as set forth in subsection (b) of this section.~~

3 ~~(b)(1) Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds~~
4 ~~received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section available to its current and~~
5 ~~prospective employees as set forth in subdivisions (A) and (B) of this~~
6 ~~subdivision (1) on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year service obligation~~
7 ~~to provide mental health services or substance use disorder treatment services,~~
8 ~~or both, at a designated or specialized service agency in this State. The funds~~
9 ~~may be used for the following purposes:~~

10 ~~(A) student loan repayment for master's level clinicians, bachelor's-~~
11 ~~level direct service staff, and nurses; and~~

12 ~~(B) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees to become~~
13 ~~master's level clinicians, bachelor's level direct service staff, and nurses.~~

14 ~~(2) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to the~~
15 ~~current and prospective employees of designated and specialized service~~
16 ~~agencies in the form of forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the~~
17 ~~employee's completion of the required service obligation.~~

18 ~~(c) On or before March 1, 2023 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall~~
19 ~~make a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on~~
20 ~~Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on~~

1 ~~Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated~~
2 ~~in this section.~~

3 ~~Sec. 28. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED~~

4 ~~AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE~~

5 ~~DEVELOPMENT; APPROPRIATION~~

6 ~~In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from the~~
7 ~~General Fund to the Agency of Human Services for distribution to the~~
8 ~~designated and specialized service agencies for student loan forgiveness and~~
9 ~~tuition assistance pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 29e.~~

10 ~~Sec. 27. 18 V.S.A. § 40 is added to read:~~

11 ~~§ 40. VERMONT DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE~~

12 ~~AGENCY STAFF FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM~~

13 ~~(a) As used in this section:~~

14 ~~(1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation~~
15 ~~established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.~~

16 ~~(2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility~~
17 ~~requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.~~

18 ~~(3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education~~
19 ~~institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.~~

1 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
2 tuition, which may also cover room, board, and the cost of required books and
3 supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

4 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Designated and Specialized Service
5 Agency Staff Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created under this section.

6 (b) The Vermont Designated and Specialized Service Agency Staff
7 Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the
8 Agency of Human Services in collaboration with the Corporation. The
9 Program provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in a degree program at
10 an eligible school who commit to working at a Vermont designated agency or
11 specialized service agency and who meet the eligibility requirements in
12 subsection (d) of this section.

13 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
14 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
15 General Assembly for this purpose.

16 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
17 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
18 requirements:

19 (1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program, whether through in-
20 person or remote instruction, that leads to a two-year or four-year
21 postsecondary degree;

1 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
2 is enrolled;

3 (3) agree to work at a Vermont designated agency or specialized service
4 agency for a minimum of one year for each year of forgivable loan awarded;

5 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
6 the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
7 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
8 service required in subdivision (3) of this subsection;

9 (5) have completed the Program's application form and the Free
10 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), in accordance with a schedule
11 determined by the Corporation; and

12 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
13 require.

14 (e) If an eligible individual fails to work at a Vermont designated agency or
15 specialized service agency in compliance with the Program for a period that
16 would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the
17 individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in
18 consultation with the Agency, then the individual shall receive only partial
19 loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the
20 interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the
21 time of entering the Program.

1 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
2 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
3 forgivable loan amounts.

4 **Sec. 28. VERMONT DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE**
5 **AGENCY STAFF FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM;**
6 **APPROPRIATION**

7 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
8 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont
9 Designated and Specialized Service Agency Staff Forgivable Loan Incentive
10 Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 40.

11 Sec. 28a. 18 V.S.A. § 41 is added to read:

12 § 40. VERMONT DENTAL HYGIENIST FORGIVABLE LOAN
13 INCENTIVE PROGRAM

14 (a) As used in this section:

15 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
16 established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

17 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
18 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

19 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
20 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

1 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
2 tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of required books
3 and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

4 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Dental Hygienist Forgivable Loan
5 Incentive Program created under this section.

6 (b) The Vermont Dental Hygienist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is
7 created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration
8 with the Corporation. The Program provides forgivable loans to students
9 enrolled in an eligible school who commit to working as a dental hygienist in
10 this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this
11 section.

12 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
13 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
14 General Assembly for this purpose.

15 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
16 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
17 requirements:

18 (1) be enrolled at a dental hygienist program at an eligible school;

19 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
20 is enrolled;

1 (3) agree to work as a dental hygienist in Vermont for a minimum of
2 one year following licensure for each year of forgivable loan awarded;

3 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
4 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
5 subsection (g) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
6 service required in this subsection;

7 (5) have completed the Program’s application form, the Free
8 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and the Vermont grant
9 application each academic year of enrollment in accordance with a schedule
10 determined by the Corporation; and

11 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
12 require.

13 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a dental hygienist in this State
14 for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit
15 received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the
16 Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the
17 individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of
18 the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit agreement or
19 promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.

20 (f) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this
21 section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds

1 are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over
2 and shall be available to the Department of Health and the Corporation in the
3 following fiscal year to award additional forgivable loans as set forth in this
4 section.

5 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
6 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
7 forgivable loan amounts.

8 **Sec. 29b. VERMONT DENTAL HYGIENIST FORGIVABLE LOAN**
9 **INCENTIVE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION**

10 In fiscal year 2024, the sum of \$XXX is appropriated from the General
11 Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont Dental
12 Hygienist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 41.

13 * * * Economic Development; Technical Assistance * * *

14 Sec. 29. 10 V.S.A. § 2 is added to read:

15 § 2. SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE

16 (a) There is created the Small Business Technical Assistance Exchange, a
17 business assistance program through which the regional development
18 corporations shall provide small- and mid-sized businesses with professional
19 and technical assistance:

20 (1) through in-house Business Navigators;

1 (2) through partnerships with organizations specializing in outreach to
2 mature workers, youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been
3 involved with the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color
4 Vermonters, New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations;
5 and

6 (3) through grants to private providers for professional services,
7 including:

8 (A) business operations, financial management, and grant writing;

9 (B) digital strategies;

10 (C) architecture and physical space design;

11 (D) reconfiguring manufacturing equipment and processes and
12 incorporating safety measures;

13 (E) technology and software consulting;

14 (F) legal and other professional services; and

15 (G) other technical assistance.

16 (b)(1) Through the Exchange, the regional development corporations shall
17 maintain a directory of, and build connections to, Vermont technical assistance
18 providers who have demonstrated the ability and expertise to assist businesses
19 with critical tools to grow and adapt their businesses to the ever-changing
20 business climate.

1 (2) The Exchange shall award technical assistance grants of not more
2 than \$5,000.00 per business for technical services from approved providers.

3 (3) To be eligible to receive technical assistance through the Exchange,
4 a business:

5 (A) must be a for-profit entity located in Vermont; and

6 (B) must have at least \$5,000.00 in average annual revenue.

7 (4) A business whose owner’s income is higher than the federal labor
8 market area in which the business operates, as evidenced by a self-attestation
9 provided by the owner, shall provide a 50 percent match for the costs of
10 professional services funded by a grant.

11 (c) The regional development corporations shall:

12 (1) operate the Exchange to produce benefits for both the client
13 companies as well as the vendors providing the assistance;

14 (2) conduct outreach and direct engagement to promote participation by
15 businesses in rural areas of this State and businesses owned by mature workers,
16 youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been involved with
17 the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters,
18 New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations; and

19 (3) supporting businesses in anticipating and addressing changing
20 workforce needs and availability through creative solutions, including split
21 shifts, shorter workweeks, and cross training.

1 § 6654 except, notwithstanding the grant limitations in 10 V.S.A. § 6654,
2 projects supported by this appropriation shall not be limited to a maximum
3 amount per site. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development
4 shall award the amount of \$1,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2024 to regional
5 planning commissions for the purposes of brownfields assessment. In
6 awarding funds under this section, the Secretary, in consultation with VAPDA,
7 shall select one regional planning commission to administer these funds. To
8 ensure statewide availability, the selected regional planning commission shall
9 subgrant to regional planning commissions with brownfield programs, with not
10 more than 10 percent of the funds being used for administrative purposes.

11 Sec. 33. 10 V.S.A. § 6654(e) is amended to read:

12 (e) A grant may be awarded by the Secretary of Commerce and
13 Community Development with the approval of the Secretary of Natural
14 Resources, provided that:

15 (1) A grant may not exceed \$50,000.00 for characterization and
16 assessment of a site.

17 (2) A grant may not exceed ~~\$200,000.00~~ \$500,000.00 for remediation of
18 a site.

19 (3) A grant may be used by an applicant to purchase environmental
20 insurance relating to the performance of the characterization, assessment, or

1 remediation of a Brownfield site in accordance with a corrective action plan
2 approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

3 (4) Financial assistance may be provided to applicants by developing a
4 risk sharing pool, an indemnity pool, or other insurance mechanism designed
5 to help applicants.

6 (5) All reports generated by financial assistance from the Brownfield
7 Revitalization Fund, including site assessments, site investigations, feasibility
8 studies, corrective action plans, and completion reports shall be provided as
9 hard copies to the Secretaries of Commerce and Community Development and
10 of Natural Resources.

11 * * * Economic Development; New Relocating Employee * * *

12 Sec. 34. 10 V.S.A. § 4 is amended to read:

13 § 4. NEW RELOCATING EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

14 * * *

15 (e) As used in this section:

16 * * *

17 (2) “Relocating employee” means an individual who meets the
18 following criteria:

19 (A)(i) ~~On or after July 1, 2021~~ the individual is a new relocating
20 employee who meets the following criteria:

21 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State;

1 (II) the individual becomes a full-time employee at a Vermont
2 location of a for-profit or nonprofit business organization domiciled or
3 authorized to do business in this State, or of a State, municipal, or other public
4 sector employer; and

5 (III) the employer attests to the Agency that, after reasonable
6 time and effort, the employer was unable to fill the employee’s position from
7 among Vermont applicants; or

8 (ii) ~~on or after February 1, 2022~~ the individual is a new remote
9 employee who meets the following criteria:

10 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State; and

11 (II) the individual is a full-time employee of an out-of-state
12 business and performs the majority of ~~his or her~~ the employee’s employment
13 duties remotely from a home office or a co-working space located in this State.

14 (B) The individual receives gross salary or wages that equal or
15 exceed the Vermont livable wage rate calculated pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526.

16 (C) The individual is subject to Vermont income tax.

17 * * * Economic Development;

18 Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant Program * * *

1 (1) A Rural Industry Development Grant Program is created within the
2 Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide grant funding
3 through local development corporations for business relocation and expansion
4 efforts, including the purchase, demolition, and renovation of property for
5 industrial use.

6 (2)(A) There is established a Rural Industry Development Special Fund
7 comprising amounts appropriated to the Fund, contributions from other
8 sources, and the return of principal from the sale of any property invested
9 through the Program.

10 (B) Monies in the Fund shall be available to Agency to make grants
11 through the Program to assist local development corporations with business
12 relocation and expansion efforts throughout Vermont.

13 (C) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, interest
14 earned and any remaining balance at the end of the fiscal year shall be retained
15 by the Fund and carried forward in the Fund.

16 (b) Grant considerations. In making grant awards, the Agency shall
17 consider:

18 (1) the real estate needs of growing and relocating businesses, including
19 nonprofit organizations, in the applicant's region;

20 (2) the ability of the proposed project to meet the site-specific needs of
21 businesses considering whether to expand or locate in this State;

1 (3) the funding that the applicant has identified, or secured, to leverage a
2 grant award; and

3 (4) the readiness of an applicant to move a project forward.

4 (c) Eligible applicants; priority.

5 (1) To be eligible for a grant, an applicant must be a local development
6 corporation, as defined in subdivision 212(10) of this title, located within this
7 State.

8 (2) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development may
9 designate projects and agreements as first priority based on rural communities
10 that continue to experience insufficient economic and grand list growth.

11 (d) Eligible activities. A grant recipient may use funding for the following:

12 (1) to purchase land for potential industrial use;

13 (2) for the costs of site development, permitting, or providing
14 infrastructure for property the recipient owns;

15 (3) for the equity investment required for a loan transaction through the
16 Vermont Economic Development Authority under 10 V.S.A. chapter 12,
17 subchapter 3; or

18 (4) for the matching requirement of another State or federal grant
19 consistent with this section.

20 (e) Application; market assessment.

1 (1) An applicant shall include in its application a local and regional
2 market assessment that demonstrates reasonable need for the proposed
3 development and identifies imminent, potential, or existing business growth
4 opportunities.

5 (2) An applicant shall submit the following to demonstrate a readiness to
6 begin and complete the proposed project:

7 (A) community and regional support for the project;

8 (B) that grant funding is needed to complete the proposed project;

9 (C) an ability to manage the project, with requisite experience and a
10 plan for fiscal viability; and

11 (D) a description of the permitting required to proceed with the
12 project and a plan for obtaining the permits.

13 (f) Awards; amount.

14 (1) An award shall not exceed the lesser of \$1,000,000 or 20 percent of
15 the total project cost.

16 (2) A recipient may combine grant funds with funding from other
17 sources.

18 (3) The Agency shall release grant funds upon determining that the
19 applicant has met all application conditions and requirements.

1 (4) A grant recipient may apply for additional grant funds if future
2 amounts are appropriated for the Program and the funds are for a separate but
3 eligible use.

4 (g) Deed restrictions; property sales. The Agency shall include deed
5 restrictions that require the return of the principal amount of the grant to the
6 Special Fund and may require the payment of a percentage of the sales profit.

7 Sec. 37. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUND;

8 APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$5,000,000.00 is transferred from the
10 General Fund to the Rural Industry Development Grant Fund created in 10
11 V.S.A. § 6.

12 * * * Better Places * * *

13 Sec. 38. 24 V.S.A. § 2799 is amended to read:

14 § 2799. BETTER PLACES PROGRAM; CROWD GRANTING

15 (a)(1) There is created the Better Places Program within the Department of
16 Housing and Community Development, and the Better Places Fund, which the
17 Department shall manage pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5.

18 (2) The purpose of the Program is to utilize crowdfunding to spark
19 community revitalization through collaborative grantmaking for projects that
20 create, activate, or revitalize public spaces.

1 (3) The Department may administer the Program in coordination with
2 and support from other State agencies and nonprofit and philanthropic partners.

3 (b) The Fund is composed of the following:

4 (1) State or federal funds appropriated by the General Assembly;

5 (2) gifts, grants, or other contributions to the Fund; and

6 (3) any interest earned by the Fund.

7 (c) As used in this section, “public space” means an area or place that is
8 open and accessible to all people with no charge for admission and includes
9 village greens, squares, parks, community centers, town halls, libraries, and
10 other publicly accessible buildings and connecting spaces such as sidewalks,
11 streets, alleys, and trails.

12 (d)(1) The Department of Housing and Community Development shall
13 establish an application process, eligibility criteria, and criteria for prioritizing
14 assistance for awarding grants through the Program.

15 (2) The Department may award a grant to a municipality, a nonprofit
16 organization, or a community group with a fiscal sponsor for a project that is
17 located in or serves a designated downtown, village center, new town center, or
18 neighborhood development area that will create a new public space or
19 revitalize or activate an existing public space.

20 (3) The Department may award a grant to not more than ~~one project~~
21 three projects per calendar year within a municipality.

1 (4) The minimum amount of a grant award is \$5,000.00, and the
2 maximum amount of a grant award is \$40,000.00.

3 (5) The Department shall develop matching grant eligibility
4 requirements to ensure a broad base of community and financial support for
5 the project, subject to the following:

6 (A) A project shall include in-kind support and matching funds raised
7 through a crowdfunding approach that includes multiple donors.

8 (B) An applicant may not donate to its own crowdfunding campaign.

9 (C) A donor may not contribute more than \$10,000.00 or 35 percent
10 of the campaign goal, whichever is less.

11 (D) An applicant shall provide matching funds raised through
12 crowdfunding of not less than 33 percent of the grant award.

13 (e) The Department of Housing and Community Development, with the
14 assistance of a fiscal agent, shall distribute funds under this section in a manner
15 that provides funding for projects of various sizes in as many geographical
16 areas of the State as possible.

17 (f) The Department of Housing and Community Development may use up
18 to 15 percent of any appropriation to the Fund from the General Fund to assist
19 with crowdfunding, administration, training, and technological needs of the
20 Program.

1 * * * Downtown Development * * *

2 Sec. 39. 24 V.S.A. § 2792(d) is amended to read:

3 (d) The Department shall provide staff and administrative support to the
4 State Board, ~~and~~ shall produce guidelines to direct municipalities seeking to
5 obtain designation under this chapter, and shall pay per diem compensation for
6 board members pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b).

7 Sec. 40. 24 V.S.A. § 2793(b) is amended to read:

8 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
9 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
10 application, the State Board shall designate a downtown development district if
11 the State Board finds in its written decision that the municipality has:

12 * * *

13 Sec. 41. 24 V.S.A. § 2793a(b) is amended to read:

14 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
15 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
16 application, the State Board shall designate a village center if the State Board
17 finds the applicant has met the requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

18 Sec. 42. 24 V.S.A. § 2793b(b) is amended to read:

19 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
20 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
21 application, the State Board shall designate a new town center development

1 district if the State Board finds, with respect to that district, the municipality
2 has:

3 * * *

4 Sec. 43. 24 V.S.A. § 2793e(d) is amended to read:

5 (d) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
6 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
7 application, for designation of a neighborhood development area, the State
8 Board, after opportunity for public comment, shall approve a neighborhood
9 development area if the Board determines that the applicant has met the
10 requirements of this section.

11 * * * Secretary of State; One-Stop Portal * * *

12 Sec. 44. 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 196, Sec. 1, as amended by 2019 Acts
13 and Resolves No. 80, Sec. 13, is further amended to read:

14 Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

15 (a) The Secretary of State ~~State~~ Digital Services shall serve as the chair of a
16 steering committee, composed of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of
17 Commerce and Community Development, the Secretary of Administration,
18 and the Secretary of Digital Services or their designees.

19 (b) ~~The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the steering committee,~~
20 and in collaboration with other State agencies and departments and interested
21 stakeholders ~~as necessary~~, shall:

1 (1) review and consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps
2 to enhance the Secretary of State’s one-stop business portal for businesses,
3 entrepreneurs, and citizens to provide information about starting and operating
4 a business in Vermont; and

5 (2) submit on or before December 15, ~~2019~~ 2023:

6 (A) a design proposal that includes a project scope, timeline,
7 roadmap, and cost projections;

8 (B) any statutory or regulatory changes needed to implement the
9 proposal; and

10 (C) a sustainable funding model for the portal.

11 (c) The steering committee shall evaluate the cost and efficacy, and
12 integrate into the current one-stop portal to the extent feasible, features that:

13 (1) enhance State websites to simplify registrations and provide a ~~clear~~
14 comprehensive, one-stop compilation of other State business requirements,
15 including permits and licenses;

16 (2) implement a data collection component that offers the registrant the
17 option to self-identify, and make available to the public through the business
18 search function, demographic information concerning ownership of the
19 business, including whether the business is woman-owned, veteran-owned,
20 BIPOC-owned, LGBTQ-owned, or minority-owned;

1 (3) simplify the mechanism for making payments to the State by
2 allowing a person to pay amounts ~~he or she~~ the person owes to the State for
3 taxes, fees, or other charges to a single recipient within State government;

4 (3)(4) simplify annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make
5 a single filing to a single recipient within State government and check a box if
6 nothing substantive has changed from the prior year;

7 (4)(5) provide guidance, assistance with navigation, and other support to
8 persons who are forming or operating a small business;

9 (5)(6) after registration, provide information about additional and
10 ongoing State requirements and a point of contact to discuss questions or
11 explore any assistance needed;

12 (6)(7) provide guidance and information about State and federal
13 programs and initiatives, as well as State partner organizations and Vermont-
14 based businesses of interest; and

15 (7)(8) map communication channels for project updates, including
16 digital channels such as e-mail, social media, and other communications.

17 (d) All State agencies and departments shall designate a single employee or
18 team of employees who are charged with the duty to provide assistance to the
19 steering committee upon its request.

1 (e) The steering committee shall focus its review on providing services
2 through the one-stop business portal primarily for the benefit of businesses
3 with 20 or fewer employees.

4 (f) The Agency of Digital Services shall assign a project manager or
5 business analyst to report directly to the Secretary of State to assist with the
6 implementation of this act through June 30, ~~2020~~ 2025 for the purpose of
7 developing and implementing a one-stop navigable portal for businesses,
8 entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting a business in
9 Vermont, and to provide ongoing support to businesses interfacing with State
10 government.

11 Sec. 45. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19 (Committee vote: _____)

1

2

Representative _____

3

FOR THE COMMITTEE