

1 Introduced by House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

2 Date:

3 Subject: Commerce and trade; workforce development; economic  
4 development

5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to adopt  
6 miscellaneous proposals to enhance workforce and economic development  
7 opportunities.

8 An act relating to enhancing workforce and economic development  
9 opportunities

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

11 \* \* \* Education Workforce \* \* \*

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

13 Subchapter 6. Forgivable Loan Incentive Programs

14 § 2871. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

15 PROGRAM

16 (a) As used in this section:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18           (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may  
19        require.

20           (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a teacher in a Vermont public  
21        school for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan

1 benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by  
2 the Corporation, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness  
3 for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit  
4 agreement or promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering  
5 the Program.

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

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

17 Sec. 2. EMERGING PATHWAYS TO TEACHING; REPORT

18 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to encourage and support the  
19 development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators. To  
20 combat the growing educator shortage throughout the State and meet the needs

1 of Vermont students, it is necessary to invest in nontraditional educator  
2 training programs.

3 (b) Grant program.

4 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2024, there is established the  
5 Emerging Pathways Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of  
6 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional  
7 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of  
8 Education’s emerging pathways, including peer review and apprentice  
9 pathways, with the goal of increased program completion rates and increased  
10 rates of licensure of underrepresented demographics.

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

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

- 1           (A) support through the Praxis exam process;  
2           (B) local, educator-led seminars designed around the Vermont  
3 licensure portfolio themes;  
4           (C) local educator mentors;  
5           (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing  
6 process; and  
7           (E) continued professional development support within the first year  
8 of licensure.

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

16           Sec. 3. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

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

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

4        Sec. 4. EDUCATION WORKFORCE; APPROPRIATIONS

5        (a) Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), in fiscal year 2024 the amount of  
6        \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of  
7        Education for the purpose of funding the Emerging Pathways Grant Program  
8        established by Sec. 2 of this act.

9        (b) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from  
10       the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the  
11       Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 16 V.S.A.  
12       § 2871.

13       Sec. 5. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

14       (a) Educator demographics. In order to understand and improve the  
15       longstanding and well-documented issue of underrepresentation in the  
16       Vermont educator workforce, including underrepresentation of Black,  
17       Indigenous, and Persons of Color; New Americans; and other historically  
18       underrepresented communities, the Agency of Education shall collect  
19       demographic information from educators and report such information in its  
20       annual teacher and staff full-time equivalencies report. The Agency shall

1 submit the educator demographic information section of the report annually to  
2 the General Assembly on or before each January 15.

3 (b) Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant  
4 Program.

5 (1) There is created the Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity  
6 Groups Grant Program for the purpose of providing grants for the support of  
7 existing and the development of new educator affinity groups for historically  
8 underrepresented groups. The Agency of Education shall administer the  
9 Program.

10 (2) The Agency shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines  
11 necessary for the implementation of the Program established pursuant to this  
12 subsection (b).

13 (3) The sum of \$30,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
14 Agency of Education in fiscal year 2024 for the purpose of funding the  
15 Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant Program  
16 created in this subsection (b).

17 \* \* \* Corrections; Workforce \* \* \*

18 Sec. 6. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONAL

19 DEVELOPMENT; INTENT; CONTRACT

20 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to assist the Department of  
21 Corrections to continue and further engage in a professional development



1 initiative to enhance supervisory effectiveness and strengthen leadership  
2 development within the Department and among its employees. The  
3 Department’s enhanced supervisory training is part of its effort to address an  
4 employee workforce crisis and strengthen workplace satisfaction.

5 (b) The Department of Corrections shall contract or expand an existing  
6 contract with a vendor to provide supervisory and management professional  
7 development services to the Department and among its employees.

8 (c) On or before March 15, 2024, the Department and the contracted  
9 vendor shall testify before the House Committee on Corrections and  
10 Institutions about the progress and effectiveness of its professional  
11 development initiative. The Department shall make management, supervisory,  
12 and frontline staff available to testify.

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

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

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

21 CONFIDENTIALITY

1        (a) As used in this section:

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

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

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

9            (4) “Peer support program” means a program established by the  
10 Department of Corrections to provide appropriate peer support services to  
11 Department staff member.

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

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

19            (7) “Staff member” means a supervising officer as defined in  
20 subdivision 3(9) of this title, a correctional officer as defined in subdivision  
21 3(10) of this title, and any other employee of the Department.

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

6        (2) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any  
7        communication relating to a peer support session between peer support  
8        specialists, between peer support specialists and participants of the peer  
9        support program, between participants of the peer support program, or between  
10       any other Department staff member, including any oral or written information,  
11       shall not be disclosed by any individual participating in the communication.

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

18       (c) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any  
19       communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer  
20       support session, including any oral or written communication, such as notes,  
21       records, and reports related to the peer support session, shall not be admissible

1 in a judicial, administrative, or arbitration proceeding. Limitations on  
2 disclosure imposed by this subsection include disclosure during any discovery  
3 conducted as part of an adjudicatory proceeding. Limitations on disclosure  
4 imposed by this subsection shall not include knowledge acquired by the  
5 Department or staff members from observations made during the course of  
6 employment or information acquired by the by the Department or staff  
7 members during the course of employment that is otherwise subject to  
8 discovery or introduction into evidence.

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

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

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

18 (2) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of  
19 this section shall not apply to the following information as it pertains to an  
20 individual designated to receive such information in the normal course the  
21 individual's professional responsibilities:

1           (A) any threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant of a peer  
2           support session or any information conveyed in a peer support session relating  
3           to a threat of suicide or homicide;

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

6           (C) any admission of criminal conduct; or

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

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

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

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

19                                   \* \* \* Young Adult Workforce \* \* \*

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

21                                   APPROPRIATION

1       In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated from the  
2       General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to continue  
3       funding through the pilot project the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program,  
4       which supports workforce development goals through creating meaningful  
5       paid service and learning opportunities for young adults, through the Serve,  
6       Learn, and Earn Partnership made up of the Vermont Youth Conservation  
7       Corps, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Works for Women, and Resource VT.  
8       The Department shall enter into a grant agreement with the Partnership that  
9       specifies the required services and outcomes for the Program.

10                               \* \* \* Adult Learning \* \* \*

11       Sec. 9. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; APPROPRIATION

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

14                               \* \* \* Climate Workforce \* \* \*

15       Sec. 10. CLIMATE WORKFORCE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN;

16                               ADVANCE VERMONT: APPROPRIATION

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

21       (b) The campaign shall include:

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

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

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

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

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

13          Sec. 11. VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND;

14                    BUSINESS COACHING; APPROPRIATION

15          (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$60,000.00 is appropriated from the  
16          General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a  
17          subgrant to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund for a three-year period to  
18          expand its Business Coaching program to work with a group of existing energy  
19          services businesses interested in adopting a climate-centered mission and  
20          working with trades persons looking to start their own climate-centered  
21          business.

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

6       \* \* \* Higher Education; Workforce Investments; Curricula Expansion \* \* \*

7       Sec. 12. UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT; OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT;  
8                APPROPRIATION

9       In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from the  
10       General Fund to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement, in  
11       consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, for additional  
12       forgivable loans of \$5,000.00 per graduate for recent college graduates across  
13       all Vermont higher education institutions who commit to work in Vermont for  
14       two years after graduation.

15       Sec. 13. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; RESTORATIVE  
16                JUSTICE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

17       In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the  
18       General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to establish a bachelor of science  
19       program in restorative justice at Vermont State University.

20       Sec. 14. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; VERMONT POLICE  
21                ACADEMY; STUDY



1        On or before January 15, 2024, the Vermont Criminal Justice Council and  
2        representatives of the Vermont State Colleges and other public and private  
3        postsecondary institutions that offer a degree program in criminal justice shall  
4        review, consider, and take steps necessary to standardize the curricula offered  
5        and avoid redundant requirements for obtaining certification by prospective  
6        criminal justice personnel and shall submit a report of its actions to the House  
7        Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate  
8        Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs.

9        Sec. 15. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CERTIFICATE IN 3-D

10                    TECHNOLOGY; APPROPRIATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6           Sec. 16. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CRITICAL

7                           OCCUPATIONS SCHOLARSHIPS; APPROPRIATION

8           In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,800,000.00 is appropriated from the  
9           General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to provide Critical Occupations  
10           Scholarships for eligible students with a household income of \$75,000.00 or  
11           less enrolled education programs that lead to a career in an occupation with  
12           critical need, including early childhood occupations, clinical mental health  
13           counseling, criminal justice occupations, and all levels of nursing.

14           Sec. 17. UPSKILL VERMONT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

15                           APPROPRIATION

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

20                           \* \* \* Vermont Trades Scholarship Program \* \* \*

21           Sec. 18. VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

1                    APPROPRIATION

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

6                                    \* \* \* Vermont Training Program \* \* \*

7            Sec. 19. VERMONT TRAINING PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

8            In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$5,000,000 is appropriated from the  
9            General Fund to the Vermont Training Program to fulfill Vermont’s obligation  
10           to procure incentives in accordance with the Creating Helpful Incentives to  
11           Produce Semiconductors for America (CHIPS) Act.

12                                    \* \* \* Credential of Value \* \* \*

13            Sec. 20. CREDENTIAL OF VALUE GOAL; PUBLIC-PRIVATE

14                                    PARTNERSHIP; APPROPRIATION

15            (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$350,000.00 is appropriated from the  
16            General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to continue work  
17            pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 39 in support of the State’s  
18            goal articulated in 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters  
19            hold a credential of value by 2025.



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 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse  
5           Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created under this section.

6           (b) The Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable  
7           Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the  
8           Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program  
9           provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in a master’s program at an  
10           eligible school who commit to working as a psychiatric mental health nurse  
11           practitioner in this State 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 master’s degree or specialty in  
21           psychiatric mental health;

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

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

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

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

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

15           (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a psychiatric mental health  
16           nurse practitioner in this State in compliance with the Program for a period that  
17           would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the  
18           individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in  
19           consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall  
20           receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant

1 to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the  
2 individual at the time of entering the Program.

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

6 Sec. 23. PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER  
7 FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM;  
8 APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the  
10 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont  
11 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive  
12 Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 39.

13 Sec. 24. EMS TRAINING; APPROPRIATION

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

17 Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE  
18 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

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

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

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

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

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

11                            APPROPRIATION

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

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

18                            Sec. 29e. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED  
19                            AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE  
20                            DEVELOPMENT



1 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from  
2 the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery  
3 Funds to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the designated and  
4 specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency’s proportion of  
5 full-time-equivalent (FTE) ~~mental health and substance use disorder treatment~~  
6 staff to the total number of FTE ~~mental health and substance use disorder~~  
7 ~~treatment~~ staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide.  
8 The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan  
9 repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of  
10 high-quality staff to support access to services ~~mental health and substance use~~  
11 ~~disorder treatment professionals available to Vermont residents in need of their~~  
12 ~~services, as set forth in subsection (b) of this section.~~

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

20 (A) student loan repayment ~~for master’s level clinicians, bachelor’s-~~  
21 ~~level direct service staff, and nurses; and~~

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

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

7 (c) On or before March 1, ~~2023~~ 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall  
8 make a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on  
9 Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on  
10 Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated  
11 in this section.

12 Sec. 28. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED

13 AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE

14 DEVELOPMENT; APPROPRIATION

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

19 \* \* \* Economic Development; Technical Assistance \* \* \*

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

21 § 2. SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE

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

5               (1) through in-house Business Navigators;

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

11              (3) through grants to private providers for professional services,  
12       including:

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

14                   (B) digital strategies;

15                   (C) architecture and physical space design;

16                   (D) reconfiguring manufacturing equipment and processes and  
17       incorporating safety measures;

18                   (E) technology and software consulting;

19                   (F) legal and other professional services; and

20                   (G) other technical assistance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

16            (c) The regional development corporations shall:

17            (1) operate the Exchange to produce benefits for both the client  
18        companies as well as the vendors providing the assistance; and

19            (2) conduct outreach and direct engagement to promote participation by  
20        businesses in rural areas of this State and businesses owned by mature workers,  
21        youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been involved with

1 the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters,  
2 New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations.

3 (d) The regional development corporations shall publish a report on the  
4 activities and performance of the Exchange on or before January 15 and July  
5 15 each year.

6 Sec. 30. RURAL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE;

7 APPROPRIATION

8 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from the  
9 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a  
10 subgrant to provide services and assistance through the Small Business  
11 Technical Assistance Exchange created in 10 V.S.A. § 2.

12 \* \* \* Economic Development; Vermont Arts Council \* \* \*

13 Sec. 31. VERMONT ARTS COUNCIL; APPROPRIATION

14 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$72,000.00 is appropriated from the  
15 General Fund to the Vermont Arts Council to provide a State match for  
16 National Endowment for the Arts funding to enable the Council to continue its  
17 work boosting the creative economy in Vermont.

18 \* \* \* Brownfields \* \* \*

19 Sec. 32. BROWNFIELDS FUNDING; USE IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

20 The Department of Economic Development shall use the \$10,000,000.00  
21 appropriated in fiscal year 2024 for brownfields redevelopment for the

1 remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites to be used in the same  
2 manner as the Brownfields Revitalization Fund established by 10 V.S.A.  
3 § 6654 except, notwithstanding the grant limitations in 10 V.S.A. § 6654,  
4 projects supported by this appropriation shall not be limited to a maximum  
5 grant of \$500,000.00 per site. The Agency of Commerce and Community  
6 Development shall award the amount of \$1,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2024 to  
7 regional planning commissions for the purposes of brownfields assessment. In  
8 awarding funds under this section, the Secretary, in consultation with VAPDA,  
9 shall select one regional planning commission to administer these funds. To  
10 ensure statewide availability, the selected regional planning commission shall  
11 subgrant to regional planning commissions with brownfield programs, with not  
12 more than 10 percent of the funds being used for administrative purposes.

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

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

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

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

1           (3) A grant may be used by an applicant to purchase environmental  
2 insurance relating to the performance of the characterization, assessment, or  
3 remediation of a Brownfield site in accordance with a corrective action plan  
4 approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

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

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

13                     \* \* \* Economic Development; New Relocating Employee \* \* \*

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

15           § 4. NEW RELOCATING EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

16   \* \* \*

17           (e) As used in this section:

18   \* \* \*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20                           \* \* \* Economic Development;

21                           Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant Program \* \* \*



1 Sec. 35. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.18, as amended by 2022 Acts  
2 and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 46, is further amended to read:

3 Sec. H.18. COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND REVITALIZATION  
4 GRANT PROGRAM

5 \* \* \*

6 (b) Eligible applicants.

7 \* \* \*

8 (3) The following are ineligible to apply for a grant:

9 (A) a State or local government-operated business, unless affiliated  
10 with, or representative of, an applying municipality's water district;

11 (B) a business that, together with any affiliated business, owns or  
12 operates more than 20 locations, regardless of whether those locations do  
13 business under the same name or within the same industry; and

14 (C) a publicly traded company.

15 \* \* \*

16 \* \* \* Rural Industry Development Grant Fund \* \* \*

17 Sec. 36. 10 V.S.A. § 6 is added to read:

18 § 6. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

19 (a) Creation; purpose.

20 (1) A Rural Industry Development Grant Program is created within the  
21 Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide grant funding

1 through local development corporations for business relocation and expansion  
2 efforts, including the purchase, demolition, and renovation of property for  
3 industrial use.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2           (c) Eligible applicants; priority.

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 subchapter 3; or

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

19          (e) Application; market assessment.

20           (1) An applicant shall include in its application a local and regional  
21 market assessment that demonstrates reasonable need for the proposed

1 development and identifies imminent, potential, or existing business growth  
2 opportunities.

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

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

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

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

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

11 (f) Awards; amount.

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

14 (2) A recipient may combine grant funds with funding from other  
15 sources.

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

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

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

4        Sec. 37. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUND;

5                APPROPRIATION

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

9                                \* \* \* Better Places \* \* \*

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

11        § 2799. BETTER PLACES PROGRAM; CROWD GRANTING

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 (3) any interest earned by the Fund.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 \* \* \* Downtown Development \* \* \*

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

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

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

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

10 \* \* \*

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

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

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

17 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first  
18 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed  
19 application, the State Board shall designate a new town center development  
20 district if the State Board finds, with respect to that district, the municipality  
21 has:



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\* \* \*

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

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

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

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

Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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

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

(1) review and consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps to enhance the Secretary of State’s one-stop business portal for businesses,

1 entrepreneurs, and citizens to provide information about starting and operating  
2 a business in Vermont; and

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

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

6 (B) any statutory or regulatory changes needed to implement the  
7 proposal; and

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

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

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

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

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

1           ~~(3)~~(4) simplify annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make  
2 a single filing to a single recipient within State government and check a box if  
3 nothing substantive has changed from the prior year;

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

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

9           ~~(6)~~(7) provide guidance and information about State and federal  
10 programs and initiatives, as well as State partner organizations and Vermont-  
11 based businesses of interest; and

12           ~~(7)~~(8) map communication channels for project updates, including  
13 digital channels such as e-mail, social media, and other communications.

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

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

20           (f) The Agency of Digital Services shall assign a project manager or  
21 business analyst to report directly to the Secretary of State to assist with the

1 implementation of this act through June 30, ~~2020~~ 2025 for the purpose of  
2 developing and implementing a one-stop navigable portal for businesses,  
3 entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting a business in  
4 Vermont, and to provide ongoing support to businesses interfacing with State  
5 government.

6 Sec. 45. EFFECTIVE DATE

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