

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 416  
3 entitled “An act relating to teacher workforce development” respectfully  
4 reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the bill be  
5 amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu  
6 thereof the following:

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. APPROPRIATION

18           Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), the sum of \$712,500.00 is  
19 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal  
20 year 2024 for the purpose of funding the Emerging Pathways Grant Program  
21 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

1       Sec. 5. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

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

11          (b) Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant  
12          Program.

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

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

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

5           Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

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

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Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE