

Journal of the House

Monday, May 6, 2024

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rep. Woodman Page of Newport City.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Speaker led the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Message from the Governor

“May 3, 2024

The Honorable Jill Krowinski
Speaker of the House
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-2301

Dear Speaker Krowinski:

I have the honor to inform you that I have appointed Abbey Duke of Burlington, Vermont to serve in the General Assembly representing House District Chittenden-17.

Sincerely,
/s/Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/te

cc: Sarah Copeland-Hanzas, Secretary of State
BetsyAnn Wrask, Clerk of the House"

New Member Announced and Appointed to Committee

Rep. Duke of Burlington, who was recently appointed by the Governor to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Rep. Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, having taken and subscribed the oath administered by the Clerk as required by the Constitution and laws of the State, was seated and then appointed by the Speaker to the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

Committee of Conference Appointed**S. 309**

Pursuant to the request of the Senate for a Committee of Conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous changes to laws related to the Department of Motor Vehicles, motor vehicles, and vessels

The Speaker appointed as members of the Committee of Conference on the part of the House:

Rep. Coffey of Guilford

Rep. Shaw of Pittsford

Rep. Dodge of Essex

Committee of Conference Appointed**H. 563**

Pursuant to the request of the Senate for a Committee of Conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on House bill, entitled

An act relating to criminal motor vehicle offenses involving unlawful trespass, theft, or unauthorized operation

The Speaker appointed as members of the Committee of Conference on the part of the House:

Rep. Burditt of West Rutland

Rep. Dolan of Essex Junction

Rep. Arsenault of Williston

**Pending Entry on the Notice Calendar
Bill Referred to the Committee on Appropriations****S. 96**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to privatization contracts

Pending entry on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), carrying an appropriation, was referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

Third Reading; Bill Passed in Concurrence**S. 246**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to amending the Vermont basic needs budget and livable wage

Was taken up, read the third time, and passed in concurrence.

**Third Reading;
Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment**

S. 259

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to climate change cost recovery

Was taken up and read the third time.

Pending the question, Shall the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment?, **Rep. Higley of Lowell** demanded the Yeas and Nays, which demand was sustained by the Constitutional number. The Clerk proceeded to call the roll and the question, Shall the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment?, was decided in the affirmative. Yeas, 93. Nays, 39.

Those who voted in the affirmative are:

Andrews of Westford	Cordes of Lincoln	Morris of Springfield
Andriano of Orwell	Demrow of Corinth	Mrowicki of Putney
Anthony of Barre City	Dodge of Essex	Nicoll of Ludlow
Arsenault of Williston	Dolan of Essex Junction	Notte of Rutland City
Austin of Colchester	Dolan of Waitsfield	Noyes of Wolcott
Bartholomew of Hartland	Duke of Burlington	Nugent of South Burlington
Beck of St. Johnsbury	Durfee of Shaftsbury	Ode of Burlington
Berbeco of Winooski	Emmons of Springfield	Pajala of Londonderry
Birong of Vergennes	Farlice-Rubio of Barnet	Patt of Worcester
Black of Essex	Garofano of Essex	Pouech of Hinesburg
Bluemle of Burlington	Goldman of Rockingham	Priestley of Bradford
Bongartz of Manchester	Holcombe of Norwich	Rachelson of Burlington
Bos-Lun of Westminster	Hooper of Burlington	Rice of Dorset
Boyden of Cambridge	Houghton of Essex Junction	Roberts of Halifax
Brady of Williston	Hyman of South Burlington	Satcowitz of Randolph
Brown of Richmond	James of Manchester	Scheu of Middlebury
Brumsted of Shelburne	Jerome of Brandon	Sheldon of Middlebury
Burke of Brattleboro	Kornheiser of Brattleboro	Sibilia of Dover *
Burrows of West Windsor	Krasnow of South	Sims of Craftsbury
Buss of Woodstock	Burlington	Squirrell of Underhill
Campbell of St. Johnsbury	Lalley of Shelburne	Stebbins of Burlington
Carpenter of Hyde Park	LaLonde of South	Stevens of Waterbury
Carroll of Bennington	Burlington	Taylor of Colchester

Casey of Montpelier	Logan of Burlington *	Templeman of Brownington
Chase of Chester	Long of Newfane	Toleno of Brattleboro
Chase of Colchester	Masland of Thetford	Torre of Moretown
Chesnut-Tangerman of Middletown Springs	McCann of Montpelier	Troiano of Stannard
Christie of Hartford	McCarthy of St. Albans City	Waters Evans of Charlotte
Coffey of Guilford	McGill of Bridport	White of Bethel
Cole of Hartford	Mihaly of Calais	Whitman of Bennington
Conlon of Cornwall	Minier of South Burlington	Williams of Barre City
Corcoran of Bennington		Wood of Waterbury

Those who voted in the negative are:

Arrison of Weathersfield	Hango of Berkshire	Morrissey of Bennington
Bartley of Fairfax	Harrison of Chittenden	Oliver of Sheldon
Branagan of Georgia	Higley of Lowell	Page of Newport City
Brennan of Colchester	Labor of Morgan	Parsons of Newbury
Brownell of Pownal	LaBounty of Lyndon	Peterson of Clarendon
Burditt of West Rutland	Laroche of Franklin	Quimby of Lyndon
Canfield of Fair Haven	Lipsky of Stowe	Shaw of Pittsford
Clifford of Rutland City	Maguire of Rutland City	Smith of Derby *
Demar of Enosburgh	Marcotte of Coventry	Taylor of Milton
Donahue of Northfield	Mattos of Milton	Toof of St. Albans Town
Galfetti of Barre Town	McCoy of Poultney	Walker of Swanton
Goslant of Northfield	McFaun of Barre Town	Williams of Granby
Graham of Williamstown	Morgan of Milton	
Gregoire of Fairfield		

Those members absent with leave of the House and not voting are:

Chapin of East Montpelier	Headrick of Burlington	O'Brien of Tunbridge
Cina of Burlington	Hooper of Randolph	Pearl of Danville
Dickinson of St. Albans Town	Howard of Rutland City	Sammis of Castleton
Elder of Starksboro	LaMont of Morristown	Small of Winooski
Graning of Jericho	Lanpher of Vergennes	Stone of Burlington
	Leavitt of Grand Isle	Surprenant of Barnard

Rep. Logan of Burlington explained her vote as follows:

“Madam Speaker:

I support S.259 as a sensible, fair policy. It will enable Vermonters to afford the crucial climate change mitigation and resilience projects that we must do in order to adapt to climate change.”

Rep. Sibilia of Dover explained her vote as follows:

“Madam Speaker:

In 1965, remarks of American Petroleum Industry President Frank Ikard to his industry’s annual gathering acknowledged a Johnson Administration Report of the Environmental Pollution Panel of the President’s Science

Advisory Committee which warned that fossil fuel combustion could cause significant climactic changes by the end of the 20th century. In his remarks, API President Ikard noted that “[o]ne of the most important predictions of the report [was] that carbon dioxide is being added to the earth’s atmosphere by the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas,” which would lead to ‘marked changes in climate beyond local or even national efforts.’”

Rep. Smith of Derby explained his vote as follows:

“Madam Speaker:

Extortion/suing is not the answer... It should be noted that fossil fuel industries built the United States of America into the most powerful and once respected country in the world. Without fossil fuels, we would still be in the Middle Ages. Instead of suing, we should be helping them to develop cleaner burning methods.”

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 102

Rep. Chesnut-Tangerman of Middletown Springs, for the Committee on General and Housing, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to expanding employment protections and collective bargaining rights

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 21 V.S.A. § 495o is added to read:

§ 495o. EMPLOYER COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO RELIGIOUS
OR POLITICAL MATTERS; EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

(a) An employer, or an employer’s agent, shall not discharge, discipline, penalize, or otherwise discriminate against, or threaten to discharge, discipline, penalize, or otherwise discriminate against, an employee:

(1) because the employee declines:

(A) to attend or participate in an employer-sponsored meeting that has the primary purpose of communicating the employer’s opinion about religious or political matters; or

(B) to view or participate in communications with or from the employer or the employer’s agent that have the primary purpose of communicating the employer’s opinion about religious or political matters; or

(2) as a means of requiring an employee to:

(A) attend an employer-sponsored meeting that has the primary purpose of communicating the employer's opinion about religious or political matters; or

(B) view or participate in communications with or from the employer or the employer's agent that have the primary purpose of communicating the employer's opinion about religious or political matters.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) limit an employee's right to bring a civil action for wrongful termination; or

(2) diminish or limit any rights provided to an employee pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or employment contract.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit an employer that is a religious or denominational institution or organization, or any organization operated for charitable or educational purposes, that is operated, supervised, or controlled by or in connection with a religious organization, from:

(1) communicating with its employees regarding the employer's opinion on religious matters;

(2) requiring its employees to attend a meeting regarding the employer's opinion on religious matters; or

(3) requiring its employees to view or participate in communications from the employer or the employer's agent regarding the employer's opinion on religious matters.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit an employer that is a political organization, a political party, or an organization that engages, in substantial part, in political matters from:

(1) communicating with its employees regarding the employer's opinion on political matters;

(2) requiring its employees to attend a meeting regarding the employer's opinion on political matters; or

(3) requiring its employees to view or participate in communications from the employer or the employer's agent regarding the employer's opinion on political matters.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit an employer or the employer's agent from:

(1) communicating information to an employee:

(A) that the employer is required to communicate pursuant to State or federal law; or

(B) that is necessary for the employee to perform the employee's job functions or duties;

(2) requiring an employee to attend a meeting to discuss issues related to the employer's business or operation when the discussion is necessary for the employee to perform the employee's job functions or duties; or

(3) offering meetings, forums, or other communications about religious or political matters for which attendance or participation is entirely voluntary.

(f)(1) The penalty and enforcement provisions of section 495b of this subchapter shall apply to this section.

(2) The provisions against retaliation in subdivision 495(a)(8) of this subchapter shall apply to this section.

(g) As used in this section:

(1) "Political matters" means matters relating to:

(A) political affiliation;

(B) elections for political office;

(C) political parties;

(D) legislative proposals;

(E) the decision to join or support any political party or political, civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization; or

(F) any combination of subdivisions (A) through (E) of this subdivision (g)(1).

(2) "Religious matters" means matters relating to:

(A) religious affiliation;

(B) religious practice;

(C) the decision to join or support any religious or denominational organization or institution; or

(D) any combination of subdivisions (A) through (C) of this subdivision (g)(2).

Sec. 2. 21 V.S.A. § 1502 is amended to read:

§ 1502. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(6) "Employee" includes any employee, and is not limited to the employees of a particular employer unless this chapter explicitly states otherwise, and includes any individual whose work has ceased as a consequence of, or in connection with, any current labor dispute or because of any unfair labor practice and who has not obtained any other regular and substantially equivalent employment, but does not include an individual;

(A) employed as an agricultural laborer;

(B) employed by ~~his or her~~ the individual's parent or spouse;

(C) ~~employed in the domestic service of any family or person at his or her home;~~ [Repealed.]

(D) having the status of an independent contractor;

(E) employed as a supervisor;

(F) employed by an employer subject to the Railway Labor Act as ~~amended from time to time;~~ or

(G) employed by any other person who is not an employer as defined in subdivision (7) of this section.

* * *

Sec. 3. AGRICULTURAL WORKER LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAWS; STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Agricultural Worker Labor and Employment Laws Study Committee to examine the application of Vermont's labor relations and employment laws to agricultural workers in Vermont and to identify potential legislative action to provide additional coverage to agricultural workers under those laws.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

(1) four current members of the House, not all from the same political party, appointed by the Speaker of the House, of whom two shall be members of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and two shall be members of the Committee on General and Housing; and

(2) four current members of the Senate, not all from the same political party, appointed by the Committee on Committees, of whom two shall be members of the Committee on Agriculture and two shall be members of the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

(c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study how Vermont's employment and labor relations laws apply to Vermont agricultural workers and identify potential legislative action to provide additional coverage to agricultural workers under those laws. In particular, the Committee shall:

(1) identify existing employment rights for agricultural workers under Vermont and federal law;

(2) identify Vermont and federal employment and collective bargaining laws that do not apply to some or all Vermont agricultural workers;

(3) identify laws in other states that provide employment or collective bargaining rights to agricultural workers that Vermont agricultural workers do not have;

(4) paying particular attention to states with agricultural economies similar to Vermont's, examine the structure of collective bargaining rights for agricultural workers in other states that provide such rights, including coverage, certification of exclusive bargaining representatives, subjects for bargaining, procedures for resolving bargaining impasse, unfair labor practices, and costs related to organizing and contract negotiation for both employers and labor organizations;

(5) examine the structure of Vermont's existing labor relations laws, including coverage, certification of exclusive bargaining representatives, subjects for bargaining, procedures for resolving bargaining impasse, unfair labor practices, and costs related to organizing and contract negotiation for both employers and labor organizations;

(6) examine the capacity of the Vermont Labor Relations Board to administer collective bargaining in Vermont's agricultural sector;

(7) develop a framework for agricultural collective bargaining in Vermont; and

(8) identify other potential changes to Vermont's employment laws to provide additional rights and protections to agricultural workers.

(d) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the fiscal assistance of the Joint Fiscal Office, and the legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Counsel.

(e) Report.

(1) On or before December 15, 2024, the Committee shall submit a written report to the General Assembly with its findings and recommendations for legislative action.

(2) The report shall include a proposal for permitting agricultural workers to collectively bargain. The proposal shall specifically address:

(A) whether to provide for collective bargaining by agricultural workers under the State Labor Relations Act or in a separate agricultural workers' labor relations act;

(B) the minimum size of agricultural employer to be covered;

(C) whether, and if so how, to differentiate between covered employers based on their size;

(D) the minimum number of employees who may form a bargaining unit;

(E) how to address seasonal, migratory, and temporary workers;

(F) procedures for selecting and certifying an exclusive representative for a bargaining unit;

(G) mandatory subjects for bargaining;

(H) procedures for resolving bargaining impasses, including whether to permit strikes or contract imposition;

(I) unfair labor practices;

(J) the role, if any, of the Vermont Labor Relations Board in administering the proposed law;

(K) whether to provide State resources to assist parties during the process of determining a bargaining unit, certifying an exclusive representative for a bargaining unit, negotiating a contract, and resolving a bargaining impasse; and

(L) any other issues the Committee deems to be appropriate.

(3) The report shall also include a recommendation for any other legislative action to amend Vermont's employment laws in relation to agricultural workers that the Committee deems to be appropriate.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before September 6, 2024.

(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

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

(4) The Committee shall cease to exist on December 31, 2024.

(g) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than six meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

Sec. 4. 3 V.S.A. § 941 is amended to read:

§ 941. UNIT DETERMINATION, CERTIFICATION, AND
REPRESENTATION

* * *

(e)(1) Whenever, on the basis of a petition pursuant to subdivision (d)(1) of this section or a hearing pursuant to subdivision (d)(2) of this section, the Board finds substantial interest among employees in forming a bargaining unit or being represented for purposes of collective bargaining, a secret ballot election shall be conducted by the Board not more than 23 business days after the petition is filed with the Board except as otherwise provided pursuant to subdivision (4) of this subsection and subdivision (g)(4) of this section.

* * *

(g)(1) In determining the representation of State employees in a collective bargaining unit, the Board shall conduct a secret ballot of the employees within the time period set forth in subdivision (e)(1) of this section, unless the time to conduct the election is extended pursuant to subdivision (e)(4) of this section, and certify the results to the interested parties and to the State employer. The original ballot shall be so prepared as to permit a vote against representation by anyone named on the ballot. No representative will be certified with less than a majority of the votes cast by employees in the bargaining unit.

* * *

(4)(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subsection (g), if the Board determines that a petition to be represented for collective bargaining filed pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, which identifies a proposed exclusive representative of the employees in the bargaining unit, bears the signatures of at least 50 percent plus one of the employees in a bargaining unit deemed appropriate by the Board pursuant to this section, the Board shall certify the person or labor organization as the exclusive representative of the bargaining unit.

(B) Certification of a collective bargaining representative shall only be available pursuant to this subdivision (g)(4) when no other person or labor organization is currently certified or recognized as the exclusive representative of the employees in the bargaining unit.

(h) A representative chosen by secret ballot for the purposes of collective bargaining by a majority of the votes cast by secret ballot or certified pursuant to subdivision (g)(4) of this section shall be the exclusive representative of all the employees in such the bargaining unit for a minimum of one year. Such The representative shall be eligible for reelection or for recertification pursuant to subdivision (g)(4) of this section.

* * *

Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 1992 is amended to read:

§ 1992. REFERENDUM PROCEDURE FOR REPRESENTATION

(a)(1) An organization purporting to represent a majority of all of the teachers or administrators employed by the school board may be recognized by the school board without the necessity of a referendum upon the submission of a petition bearing the valid signatures of a majority of the teachers or administrators employed by that school board. Within 15 calendar days after receiving the petition, the school board shall notify the teachers or administrators of the school district in writing of its intention to either require or waive a secret ballot referendum. If the school board gives notice of its intention to waive a referendum and recognize an organization, 10 percent of the teachers or administrators employed by the school board may submit a petition within 15 calendar days thereafter, objecting to the granting of recognition without a referendum, in which event a secret ballot referendum shall be held in the district for the purpose of choosing an exclusive representative as provided pursuant to the provisions of this section. The school board and the organization purporting to represent a majority of the teachers or administrators shall, within 10 business days after the petition is submitted, agree on an impartial third party to examine the petition and determine whether a majority of the teachers or administrators support the organization. If the parties fail to agree on an impartial third party within 10 business days, the Vermont Labor Relations Board shall examine the petition and determine whether a majority of the teachers or administrators support the organization. If the impartial party or the Board determines that a majority of the teachers or administrators support the organization, it shall certify the organization as the exclusive representative of the teachers or administrators.

* * *

(b) ~~Recognition granted to~~ Certification of a negotiating unit as exclusive representative shall be valid and not subject to challenge by referendum petition or otherwise for the remainder of the fiscal year in which ~~recognition is granted~~ the certification occurs and for an additional period of 12 months after final adoption of the budget for the succeeding fiscal year and shall continue thereafter until a new referendum is called for.

(c)(1)(A) A secret ballot referendum shall be held not more than 21 calendar days after 20 percent of the teachers or administrators employed by the school board present a petition requesting a referendum on the matter of representation, except during a period of prior ~~recognition~~ certification, as provided pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

* * *

Sec. 6. 21 V.S.A. § 1581 is amended to read:

§ 1581. PETITIONS FOR ELECTION; FILING, INVESTIGATIONS,
HEARINGS, DETERMINATIONS

* * *

(b)(1) The Board shall investigate the petition and if it has reasonable cause to believe that a question of representation exists shall provide for an appropriate hearing before the Board itself, a Board member thereof, or its agents appointed for that purpose upon due notice. Written notice of the hearing shall be mailed by certified mail to the parties named in the petition not less than seven days before the hearing.

(2) If the Board finds upon the record of the hearing that a question of representation exists, it shall conduct an election by secret ballot marked at the place of election and certify to the parties, in writing, the results ~~thereof~~ of the election.

(3)(A) If the Board finds upon the record of the hearing that a petition to be represented for collective bargaining filed pursuant to subdivision (a)(1)(A) of this section, which identifies a proposed bargaining representative, bears the signatures of at least 50 percent plus one of the employees in the bargaining unit, the Board shall certify the individual or labor organization identified as the bargaining representative.

(B) Certification of a representative shall only be available pursuant to this subdivision (B) when no other individual or labor organization is currently certified or recognized as the bargaining representative.

(c) In determining whether or not a question of representation exists, ~~it~~ the Board shall apply the same regulations and rules of decision regardless of the identity of the persons filing the petition or the kind of relief sought.

* * *

Sec. 7. 21 V.S.A. § 1584 is amended to read:

§ 1584. PETITIONS AND ELECTION TO RESCIND

REPRESENTATIVE'S AUTHORITY

* * *

(b) No election ~~may~~ shall be conducted under this section in a bargaining unit or a subdivision within which in the preceding 12 months a valid election or certification of a representative pursuant to this subchapter has ~~been held~~ occurred.

Sec. 8. 21 V.S.A. § 1724 is amended to read:

§ 1724. CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

* * *

(e)(1) ~~In~~ Except as otherwise provided pursuant to subsection (h) of this section, in determining the representation of municipal employees in a collective bargaining unit, the Board shall conduct an election by secret ballot of the employees and certify the results to the interested parties and to the employer. The election shall be held not more than 23 business days after the petition is filed with the Board except as otherwise provided pursuant to subdivision (4) of this subsection.

* * *

(h)(1) Notwithstanding subsections (e)–(g) of this section, if following its investigation pursuant to subsection (b) of this section the Board determines that a petition to be represented for collective bargaining filed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, which identifies a proposed bargaining agent, bears the signatures of at least 50 percent plus one of the employees in the bargaining unit, the Board shall certify the individual or labor organization identified as the bargaining agent.

(2) Certification of a bargaining agent shall only be available pursuant to this subsection when no other individual or labor organization is currently certified or recognized as the agent of the employees in the bargaining unit.

(i) No election ~~may~~ shall be conducted under this section in a bargaining unit or a subdivision within which in the preceding 12 months a valid election has been held.

Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

Rep. Bluemle of Burlington, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on General and Housing.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on General and Housing agreed to, and third reading ordered.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 254

Rep. Morris of Springfield, for the Committee on Environment and Energy, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to including rechargeable batteries and battery-containing products under the State battery stewardship program

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment as follows:

First: In Sec. 1, 10 V.S.A. chapter 168, in section 7581, in subdivision (9), as amended, after “means” and before “readily detachable” by inserting the words “the battery is”

and, in section 7587, by striking out subsection (a) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (a) to read as follows:

(a) Sale prohibited. Except as set forth in subsection (b) of this section, no retailer shall sell or offer for sale a primary battery, rechargeable battery, or battery-containing product on or after January 1, ~~2016~~ 2026 unless the producer of the primary battery, rechargeable battery, or battery-containing product is implementing an approved ~~primary~~ battery stewardship plan, is a member of a ~~primary~~ battery stewardship organization implementing an approved ~~primary~~ battery stewardship plan, or is exempt from participation in an approved plan, as determined by review of the producers listed on the Agency website required in subsection 7586(f) of this title.

Second: By adding two new sections to be Secs. 4a and 4b to read as follows:

Sec. 4a. 10 V.S.A. § 7182(b) is amended to read:

(b) Stewardship organization registration requirements.

(1) On or before ~~January~~ July 1, 2025 and annually thereafter, a stewardship organization shall file a registration form with the Secretary. The Secretary shall provide the registration form to the stewardship organization. The registration form shall include:

* * *

Sec. 4b. 10 V.S.A. § 6615f is added to read:

§ 6615f. ADMINISTRATIVE USE CONTROLS AT CONTAMINATED SITES

(a) A petition for administrative use controls at a hazardous material contaminated site may be made by a person responding to a release at that site. The petition shall be made on a form developed by the Secretary that includes the following:

(1) a brief description of the contamination at the site and work completed under an approved corrective action plan;

(2) a legal description of the property or properties subject to administrative use controls;

(3) a digital map that shows the boundaries of the property or properties subject to the administrative use controls and any operational units on the property or properties where more detailed controls will be applied;

(4) a narrative description of the uses that are prohibited on the property under the administrative use control, including any specific restrictions applicable to operational units on the property;

(5) signatures of the property owner or persons with legal control of the property certifying that they accept the imposition of these administrative use controls on their property; and

(6) any other requirement that the Secretary requires by rule.

(b) The Secretary shall approve the administrative use controls upon finding:

(1) the administrative use controls adequately protect human health and the environment;

(2) the administrative use controls are consistent with requirements of the plan required by rules adopted pursuant to this chapter and approved by the Secretary; and

(3) the petition contains adequate information to ensure that current and future owners are aware of the restrictions.

(c) Administrative use controls may require:

(1) restrictions on the use of the property or operational units on the property where restrictions are placed;

(2) a right to access the property to ensure that the restrictions are maintained; and

(3) requirements to maintain the restrictions and report on their implementation.

(d) Administrative use controls shall be effective until a property owner or person with legal control petitions the Secretary for their removal. The Secretary shall remove the administrative use controls if the property owner:

(1) clearly demonstrates that the contamination that was the basis of the administrative use controls has naturally attenuated; or

(2) has completed a subsequent corrective action plan that either remediates the hazardous material below environmental media standards or requires alternate administrative use controls.

Rep. Ode of Burlington, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Environment and Energy.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Environment and Energy agreed to, and third reading ordered.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 310

Rep. Birong of Vergennes, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to natural disaster government response, recovery, and resiliency

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Creation of the Community Resilience and Disaster
Mitigation Grant Program and Fund * * *

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 48 is added to read:

§ 48. COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND DISASTER MITIGATIONGRANT PROGRAM

(a) Program established. There is established the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Grant Program to award grants to covered municipalities to provide support for disaster mitigation, adaptation, or repair activities.

(b) Definition. As used in this section, “covered municipality” means a city, town, fire district or incorporated village, and all other governmental incorporated units that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program in accordance with 42 U.S.C. Chapter 50.

(c) Administration; implementation.

(1) Grant awards. The Department of Public Safety, in coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation, shall administer the Program, which shall award grants for the following:

(A) technical assistance for natural disaster mitigation, adaptation, or repair to municipalities;

(B) technical assistance for the improvement of municipal stormwater systems and other municipal infrastructure;

(C) projects that implement disaster mitigation measures, adaptation, or repair, including watershed restoration and similar activities that directly reduce risks to communities, lives, public collections of historic value, and property; and

(D) projects to adopt and meet the State’s model flood hazard bylaws.

(2) Grant Program design. The Department of Public Safety, in coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation, shall design the Program. The Program design shall:

(A) establish an equitable system for distributing grants statewide on the basis of need according to a system of priorities, including the following:

(i) projects that meet the standards established by the Department of Environmental Conservation’s Stream Alteration Rule and Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor Rule.

(ii) projects that use funding as a match for other grants, including grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA);

(iii) projects that are in hazard mitigation plans; and

(iv) projects that are geographically located around the State;

(B) establish guidelines for disaster mitigation measures and costs that will be eligible for grant funding; and

(C) establish eligibility criteria for covered municipalities, but allow municipalities to partner with community organizations to apply for grants and implement projects awarded funding by those grants.

(3) Annually, by November 15, the Department of Public Safety shall submit a report detailing the current Program design and any grants awarded pursuant to this section during the preceding year to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations.

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 49 is added to read:

§ 49. COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND DISASTER MITIGATION

FUND

(a) Creation. There is established the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund to provide funding to the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Grant Program established in section 48 of this title. The Fund shall be administered by the Department of Public Safety.

(b) Monies in the Fund. The Fund shall consist of monies appropriated or transferred to the Fund.

(c) Fund administration.

(1) The Commissioner of Finance and Management may anticipate receipts to this Fund and issue warrants based thereon.

(2) The Commissioner of Public Safety shall maintain accurate and complete records of all receipts by and expenditures from the Fund.

(3) All balances remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall be carried over to the following year.

(d) Reports. On or before January 15 each year, the Commissioner of Public Safety shall submit a report to the House Committees on Environment and Energy and House Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Government Operations and Natural Resources and Energy with an update on the expenditures from the Fund. For each fiscal year, the report shall include a summary of each project receiving funding. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection.

Sec. 3. [Deleted.]

Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 8557 is amended to read:

§ 8557. VERMONT FIRE SERVICE TRAINING COUNCIL

(a)(1) Sums for the expenses of the operation of training facilities and curriculum of the Vermont Fire Service Training Council not to exceed ~~\$1,200,000.00~~ \$1,500,000.00 per year shall be paid to the Fire Safety Special Fund created by 20 V.S.A. § 3157 by insurance companies, writing fire, homeowners multiple peril, allied lines, farm owners multiple peril, commercial multiple peril (fire and allied lines), private passenger and commercial auto, and inland marine policies on property and persons situated within the State of Vermont within 30 days after notice from the Commissioner of Financial Regulation of such estimated expenses. Captive companies shall be excluded from the effect of this section.

* * *

(4) An amount not less than ~~\$150,000.00~~ \$450,000.00 shall be specifically allocated to the Emergency Medical Services Special Fund established under 18 V.S.A. § 908 for the provision of training programs for certified Vermont EMS first responders and licensed emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, and paramedics.

* * *

* * * Credit Facilities for Local Investments * * *

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

§ 10. VERMONT STATE TREASURER; CREDIT FACILITY FOR LOCAL INVESTMENTS

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 433(a) to the contrary, the Vermont State Treasurer shall have the authority to establish a credit facility of up to 10 percent of the State's average cash balance on terms acceptable to the Treasurer and consistent with prudent investment principles and guidelines pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 433(b)–(c) and the Uniform Prudent Investor Act, 14A V.S.A. chapter 9.

(b) The Treasurer may use amounts available under subsection (a) of this section to provide financing for infrastructure projects in Vermont mobile home parks and may modify the terms of such financing in ~~his or her~~ the Treasurer's discretion as is necessary to promote the availability of mobile home park housing and to protect the interests of the State.

(c) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 433(a) to the contrary, and in addition to the provisions of subsection (a) on this section, the Vermont State Treasurer shall have the authority to establish a credit facility of up to two and one-half percent of the State's average cash balance on terms acceptable to the Treasurer and consistent with prudent investment principles and guidelines pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 433(b)–(c) and the Uniform Prudent Investor Act, 14A V.S.A. chapter 9. The Treasurer may use amounts available under this subsection only to provide financing for climate infrastructure and resilience projects and may modify the terms of such financing in the Treasurer's discretion as is necessary to protect the interest of the State.

(d) Annually, by January 15, the Treasurer shall submit a report detailing the activities, financing, and accounting of any credit facilities created pursuant to subsection (c) of this section during the preceding calendar year to the Governor, the House Committees on Appropriations, Commerce and Economic Development, and Government Operations and Military Affairs, and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, Appropriations, and Government Operations.

* * * Defining First Responder * * *

Sec. 5. 20 V.S.A. § 2 is amended to read:

§ 2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(6) “Emergency management” means the preparation for and implementation of all emergency functions, other than the functions for which the U.S. Armed Forces or other federal agencies are primarily responsible, to prevent, plan for, mitigate, and support response and recovery efforts from all-hazards. Emergency management includes the utilization of first responders and other emergency management personnel and the equipping, exercising, and training designed to ensure that this State and its communities are prepared to deal with all-hazards.

(7) “First responder” means State, county, and local governmental and nongovernmental personnel who provide immediate support services necessary to perform emergency management functions during an emergency or all-hazards event, including:

(A) emergency management and public safety personnel;

(B) firefighters, as that term is defined in section 3151 of this title;

(C) law enforcement officers, as that term is defined in section 2351a of this title;

(D) public safety telecommunications and dispatch personnel;

(E) emergency medical personnel and volunteer personnel, as those terms are defined in 24 V.S.A. § 2651;

(F) licensed professionals who would provide clinical services and emergency care in hospitals and medical facilities created to address an all-hazards event;

(G) public health personnel;

(H) public works personnel, including water, wastewater, and stormwater personnel; and

(I) equipment operators and other skilled personnel, who provide services necessary to enable the performance of emergency management functions.

(8) “Hazard mitigation” means any action taken to reduce or eliminate the threat to persons or property from all-hazards.

(8)(9) “Hazardous chemical or substance” means:

* * *

(9)(10) “Hazardous chemical or substance incident” means any mishap or occurrence involving hazardous chemicals or substances that may pose a threat to persons or property.

(10)(11) “Homeland security” means the preparation for and carrying out of all emergency functions, other than the functions for which the U.S. Armed Forces or other federal agencies are primarily responsible, to prevent, minimize, or repair injury and damage resulting from or caused by enemy attack, sabotage, or other hostile action.

(11)(12) “Radiological incident” means any mishap or occurrence involving radiological activity that may pose a threat to persons or property.

Sec. 6. [Deleted.]

* * * Emergency Management * * *

Sec. 7. 20 V.S.A. § 6 is amended to read:

§ 6. LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

(a) Each town and city of this State ~~is hereby authorized and directed to~~

shall establish a local organization for emergency management in accordance with the State emergency management plan and program. The executive officer or legislative branch of the town or city ~~is authorized to~~ shall appoint a town or city emergency management director who shall have direct responsibility for the organization, administration, and coordination of the local organization for emergency management, subject to the direction and control of the executive officer or legislative branch. If the town or city ~~that~~ has not adopted the town manager form of government in accordance with 24 V.S.A. chapter 37 and the executive officer or legislative branch of the town or city has not appointed an emergency management director, the executive officer or legislative branch shall ~~be the~~ appoint a town or city emergency management director. The town or city emergency management director may appoint an emergency management coordinator and other staff as necessary to accomplish the purposes of this chapter. In an instance of a vacancy of the position of a town or city emergency management director, the executive officer or the chair or president of the legislative branch shall be the emergency management director.

(b) Each local organization for emergency management shall perform emergency management functions within the territorial limits of the town or city within which it is organized ~~and, in~~ which may include coordinating the utilization of first responders and other emergency management personnel pursuant to the all-hazards emergency management plan adopted pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. In addition, each local organization for emergency management shall conduct such functions outside the territorial limits as may be required pursuant to the provisions of this chapter and in accord with rules adopted by the Governor.

(c)(1) Each local organization shall develop and maintain an all-hazards emergency management plan in accordance with the State Emergency Management Plan and guidance set forth by the Division of Emergency Management.

(2) The Division shall amend the local emergency plan template and any best management practices or guidance the Division issues to municipalities to address the need for the siting of local and regional emergency shelters in a manner that allows access by those in need during an all-hazards event.

(3) The Division shall advise municipalities that when a shelter is sited under a local emergency plan, the municipality should work with the Agency of Human Services, the American Red Cross, and community-based emergency or charitable food providers, to assess the facility and the facility's potential operations, including the characteristics of the surrounding area during an all-hazards event, multiple routes of travel and possible hazards that

could prevent access to the shelter, and the need for immediate and sustained access to food and water for individuals using the shelter.

(4) The Division, in coordination with the Agency of Human Services, shall advise municipalities, upon completion of a local emergency management plan, on how to conduct training and exercises pertaining to sheltering.

(d) Regional emergency management committees shall be established by the Division of Emergency Management.

* * *

(3) A regional emergency management committee shall consist of voting and nonvoting members.

(A) Voting members. The local emergency management director or designee and one representative from each town and city in the region shall serve as the voting members of the committee. A representative from a town or city shall be a member of the town's or city's emergency services community and shall be appointed by the town's or city's executive or legislative branch.

(B) Nonvoting members. Nonvoting members may include representatives from the following organizations serving within the region: fire departments, emergency medical services, law enforcement, other entities providing emergency response personnel, media, transportation, regional planning commissions, hospitals, the Department of Health's district office, the Division of Emergency Management, organizations serving vulnerable populations, local libraries, arts and culture organizations, regional development corporations, local business organizations, community-based emergency or charitable food providers, and any other interested public or private individual or organization.

* * *

Sec. 8. 20 V.S.A. § 31 is amended to read:

§ 31. STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMISSION; DUTIES

(a) The Commission shall have authority to:

* * *

(7) Ensure that ~~a State plan~~ the State Emergency Management Plan will go into effect when an accident occurs involving the transportation of hazardous materials. The ~~plan~~ Plan shall be exercised at least once annually and shall be coordinated with local and State emergency plans.

* * *

Sec. 9. 20 V.S.A. § 32 is amended to read:

§ 32. LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEES; CREATION;
DUTIES

(a) One or more local emergency planning committees, created under EPCRA, shall be appointed by the State Emergency Response Commission. “EPCRA” means the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act of 1986, 42 U.S.C. §§ 11001–11050.

(b) All local emergency planning committees shall include representatives from the following: fire departments; local and regional emergency medical services; local, county, and State law enforcement; other entities providing first responders or emergency management personnel; media; transportation; regional planning commissions; hospitals; industry; the Vermont National Guard; the Department of Health’s district office; and an animal rescue organization, and may include any other interested public or private individual or organization. Where the local emergency planning committee represents more than one region of the State, the Commission shall appoint representatives that are geographically diverse.

(c) A local emergency planning committee shall perform all the following duties:

(1) Carry out all the requirements of a committee pursuant to EPCRA, including preparing a local emergency planning committee plan. The plan shall be coordinated with the State emergency management plan and may be expanded to address all-hazards identified in the State emergency management plan. At a minimum, the local emergency planning committee plan shall include the following:

(A) Identifies facilities and transportation routes of extremely hazardous substances.

(B) Describes the utilization of first responders and other emergency management personnel and emergency response procedures, including those identified in facility plans.

(C) Designates a local emergency planning committee coordinator and facility coordinators to implement the plan.

(D) Outlines emergency notification procedures.

(E) Describes how to determine the probable affected area and population by releases of hazardous substances.

(F) Describes local emergency equipment and facilities and the persons responsible for them.

(G) Outlines evacuation plans.

(H) Provides for coordinated local training to ensure integration with the State emergency management plan.

(I) Provides methods and schedules for exercising emergency plans.

(2) Upon receipt by the committee or the committee's designated community emergency coordinator of a notification of a release of a hazardous chemical or substance, ensure that the local emergency plan has been implemented.

(3) Consult and coordinate with the heads of local government emergency services, the emergency management director or designee, persons in charge of local first responders and other local emergency management personnel, regional planning commissions, and the managers of all facilities within the jurisdiction regarding the facility plan.

(4) Review and evaluate requests for funding and other resources and advise the State Emergency Response Commission concerning disbursement of funds.

(5) Work to support the various emergency services and other entities providing first responders or emergency management personnel, mutual aid systems, town governments, regional planning commissions, State agency district offices, and others in their area in conducting coordinated all-hazards emergency management activities.

Sec. 10. 20 V.S.A. § 41 is added to read.

§ 41. STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN.

The Department of Public Safety's Vermont Emergency Management Division shall create, and republish as needed, but not less than every five years, a comprehensive State Emergency Management Plan. The Plan shall detail response systems during all-hazards events, including communications, coordination among State, local, private, and volunteer entities, and the deployment of State and federal resources. The Plan shall also detail the State's emergency preparedness measures and goals, including those for the prevention of, protection against, mitigation of, and recovery from all-hazards events. The Plan shall include templates and guidance for regional emergency management and for local emergency plans that support municipalities in their respective emergency management planning.

Sec. 11. VERMONT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS REVIEW

(a) Review. On or before June 30, 2025, the Department of Public Safety's Division of Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) shall conduct an after-action review of the State's disaster preparedness leading up to, during, and after the 2023 summer flooding events throughout the State, overseen by the Director of VEM. The review shall examine all aspects of the State's response and shall include input from the whole community. In addition to the federal Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program's requirements, the review shall include examining the adequacy of early warning and evacuation orders, designated evacuation routes and emergency shelters, the ability to provide food and water where it is needed, the present system of local emergency management directors in wide-spread emergencies and the State's present emergency communications systems.

(b) Report. On or before December 15, 2025, the Director of VEM shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations with its findings regarding the disaster preparedness review, and, if the Director determines there to be inadequacies present in the State's disaster preparedness, a plan for improving the State's disaster preparedness, which may include any recommendations for legislative action.

Sec. 12. [Deleted.]

* * * Municipal Stormwater Utilities * * *

Sec. 13. 24 V.S.A. chapter 101 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 101. SEWAGE, SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM, AND
STORMWATER SYSTEMS

§ 3601. DEFINITIONS

~~The definitions established in section 3501 of this title shall establish the meanings of those words as used in this chapter, and the following words and phrases as used in~~ As used in this chapter shall have the following meanings:

(1) ~~“Necessity” means a reasonable need that considers the greatest public good and the least inconvenience and expense to the condemning party and to the property owner. Necessity shall not be measured merely by expense or convenience to the condemning party. Due consideration shall be given to the adequacy of other property and locations; to the quantity, kind, and extent of property that may be taken or rendered unfit for use by the proposed taking; to the probable term of unfitness for use of the property; to the effect of construction upon scenic and recreational values, upon home and homestead~~

~~rights and the convenience of the owner of the land; to the effect upon town grand list and revenues.~~

(2) ~~“Board” means the board of sewage disposal system commissioners.~~

(2) “Domestic sewage” or “house sewage” means sanitary sewage derived principally from dwellings, business buildings, and institutions.

(3) “Industrial wastes” or “trade wastes” means liquid wastes from industrial processes, including suspended solids.

(4) “Necessity” means a reasonable need that considers the greatest public good and the least inconvenience and expense to the condemning party and to the property owner. Necessity shall not be measured merely by expense or convenience to the condemning party. Due consideration shall be given to the adequacy of other property and locations; to the quantity, kind, and extent of property that may be taken or rendered unfit for use by the proposed taking; to the probable term of unfitness for use of the property; to the effect of construction upon scenic and recreational values, upon home and homestead rights and the convenience of the owner of the land; to the effect upon town grand list and revenues.

(5) “Sanitary sewage” means used water supply commonly containing human excrement.

(6) “Sanitary treatment” means an approved method of treatment of solids and bacteria in sewage before final discharge.

(7) “Sewage” means the used water supply of a community, including such used water supply or stormwater as may or may not be mixed with these liquid wastes from the community.

(8) “Sewage system” means any equipment, stormwater control system, pipe line system, and facilities as are needed for and appurtenant to the treatment or disposal of sewage and waters, including a sewage treatment or disposal plant and separate pipe lines and structural or nonstructural facilities as are needed for and appurtenant to the treatment or disposal of storm, surface, and subsurface waters.

(9) ~~The phrase “sewage treatment or disposal plant” shall include~~ includes, for the purposes of this chapter, any plant, equipment, system, and facilities, whether structural or nonstructural, as are necessary for and appurtenant to the treatment or disposal by approved sanitary methods of domestic sewage, garbage, industrial wastes, stormwater, or surface water.

(10) “Stormwater” has the same meaning as “stormwater runoff” under 10 V.S.A. § 1264.

(11) “Stormwater management system” means any structure, or improvement, whether structural or nonstructural, necessary for collecting, containing, controlling, treating, or conveying stormwater, including sewers, curbs, drains, conduits, natural and man-made channels, settling ponds, pipes, and culverts.

§ 3602. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS; MEMBERSHIP

(a) Except as provided for in subsection (b) of this section, the selectboard of a town, the trustees of a village, the prudential committee of a fire or lighting district, or the mayor and board of aldermen of a city, shall be the board of commissioners for the sewage system of a municipality.

(b) The legislative body of the municipality may vote to constitute a separate board of sewage system commissioners. The board shall have not less than three nor more than seven members, who shall be residents of the municipality. Members shall be appointed, and any vacancy filled, by the legislative body of the municipality. The term of each member shall be four years. Any member may be removed by the legislative body of the municipality for just cause after due notice and hearing.

§ 3603. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS; DUTIES AND AUTHORITY

(a) The board shall have the supervision of the municipal sewage system and shall make and establish all needed rates for rent and rules for control and operation of the system. The board may require:

(1) the owners of buildings, subdivisions, or developments abutting a public street or highway to have all sewers from those buildings, subdivisions, or developments connected to the municipal corporations sewer system; and

(2) any individual, person, or corporation to connect to the municipal sewage system for the purposes of abating pollution of the waters of the State.

(b) The commissioners may appoint or remove a superintendent at their pleasure.

§ ~~3602~~ 3604. SEWAGE DISPOSAL PLANT, SYSTEM; CONSTRUCTION

A municipal corporation may:

(1) construct, maintain, operate, and repair a sewage disposal plant and system;

(2) pursuant to the procedures established in this chapter, take, purchase, and acquire, in the manner hereinafter mentioned, real estate and easements necessary for its purposes;

(3) may enter in and upon any land for the purpose of making surveys; and

(4) may lay and connect pipes, stormwater management systems, and sewers, and connect the same as may be necessary to convey and treat stormwater runoff or sewage for the purpose of disposing and dispose of sewage by such municipal corporation.

§ ~~3603~~ 3605. ENTRY ON LANDS

~~Such~~ A municipal corporation, for the purposes enumerated in section ~~3602~~ 3604 of this title ~~chapter~~, may:

(1) enter upon and use any land and enclosures over or through which it may be necessary for pipes, stormwater management systems, and sewer to pass, ~~and may thereon;~~

(2) at any time, place, lay, and construct ~~such~~ any pipes and sewers, appurtenances, and connections as may be necessary for the complete construction and repairing of the ~~same from time to time, may the system;~~ and

(3) open the ground in any streets, lanes, avenues, highways, and public grounds for the purposes ~~hereof;~~ described in this section, provided that ~~such the~~ streets, lanes, avenues, highways, and public grounds shall not be injured; but shall be left in as good condition as before the laying of ~~such the~~ pipes, stormwater management systems, and sewers.

§ ~~3604~~ 3606. PETITION FOR HEARING TO DETERMINE NECESSITY

The municipal corporation may agree with all the owners of land or interest in land affected by ~~the a~~ survey made under section ~~3602~~ 3604 of this title ~~chapter~~ for the conveyance of ~~their~~ the owners' interest. Where ~~such the~~ agreement is not made, the board shall petition a ~~Superior judge~~ the Civil Division of the Superior Court, setting forth ~~therein in the petition~~ that ~~such the~~ board proposes to take certain land, or rights ~~therein in the land,~~ and describing ~~such the~~ lands or rights, ~~and the.~~ The survey shall be ~~annexed to said included in the petition and made a part thereof.~~ Such The petition shall set forth the purposes for which ~~such the~~ land or rights are desired, and shall contain a request that ~~such judge~~ the court fix a time and place when ~~he or she or some other Superior judge~~ the court will hear all parties concerned and determine whether ~~such the~~ taking is necessary.

§ ~~3605~~ 3607. HEARING TO DETERMINE NECESSITY

The judge to whom ~~such the~~ petition is presented shall fix the time for hearing, which shall not be more than 60 ~~nor~~ or less than 30 days from the date the judge signs ~~such the~~ order. Likewise, the judge shall fix the place for hearing, which shall be the county courthouse or any other convenient place

within the county in which the land in question is located. If the Superior judge to whom ~~such~~ the petition is presented cannot hear the petition at the time set ~~therefore for the hearing~~, ~~the Superior judge shall call upon the Chief Superior Judge to~~ shall assign another Superior judge to hear ~~such~~ the cause at the time and place assigned in the order.

§ ~~3606~~ 3608. SERVICE AND PUBLICATION OF PETITION

(a) A copy of the petition together with a copy of the court's order fixing the time and place of hearing shall be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the town in which the land included in the survey lies once a week for three consecutive weeks on the same day of the week, ~~the~~. The last publication to be not less than five days before the hearing date, ~~and a~~.

(b) A copy of the petition, together with a copy of the court's order fixing the time and place of hearing, and a copy of the survey shall be placed on file in the clerk's office of the town.

(c) The petition, together with the court's order fixing the time and place of hearing, shall be served upon each person owning or having an interest in land to be purchased or condemned like a summons, or, on absent defendants, in ~~such~~ the manner as the Supreme Court may by rule provide for service of process in civil actions. If the service on any defendant is impossible, upon affidavit of the sheriff, deputy sheriff, or constable attempting service, ~~therein~~ stating that the location of the defendant within or ~~without~~ outside the State is unknown and that ~~he or she~~ the defendant has no known agent or attorney in the State of Vermont upon ~~which~~ whom service may be made, the publication ~~herein provided~~ required by this section shall be deemed sufficient service on the defendant.

(d) Compliance with the provisions ~~hereof~~ of this section shall constitute sufficient service upon and notice to any person owning or having any interest in the land proposed to be taken or affected.

§ ~~3607~~ 3609. HEARING AND ORDER OF NECESSITY

(a) At the time and place appointed for the hearing, the court shall hear all persons interested and wishing to be heard. If any person owning or having an interest in land to be taken or affected appears and objects to the necessity of taking the land included within the survey or any part ~~thereof~~ of the survey, then the court shall require the board to proceed with the introduction of evidence of the necessity of ~~such~~ the taking.

(b) The burden of proof of the necessity of the taking shall be upon the board.

(c) The court may cite in additional parties including other property owners whose interests may be concerned or affected by any taking of land or interest ~~therein~~ in land based on any ultimate order of the court.

(d) The court shall make findings of fact and file them. The court shall, by its order, determine whether necessity requires the taking of ~~such~~ land and rights and may modify or alter the proposed taking ~~in such respects as to it~~ the court may seem deem proper.

§ 3608 3610. APPEAL FROM ORDER OF NECESSITY

(a) If the State, municipal corporation, or any owner affected by the order of the court is aggrieved ~~thereby~~ by the order, an appeal may be taken to the Supreme Court in ~~such~~ the manner as the Supreme Court may by rule provide for appeals from ~~the Civil Division of the Superior courts~~ Court.

(b) In the event an appeal is taken, all proceedings shall be stayed until final disposition of the appeal. If no appeals are taken within the time provided ~~therefor~~ or, if appeal is taken, upon its final disposition, a copy of the order of the court shall be placed on file within 10 days in the office of the clerk of each town in which the land affected lies, and ~~thereafter~~ for a period of one year, the board may institute proceedings for the condemnation of the land included in the survey as finally approved by the court without further hearing or consideration of any question of the necessity of the taking.

§ 3609 3611. COMPENSATION; CONDEMNATION

(a) When an owner of land or rights ~~therein~~ in land and the board are unable to agree on the amount of compensation ~~therefor~~ or in case the owner is an infant, a person who lacks capacity to protect ~~his or her~~ the person's interests due to a mental condition or psychiatric disability, absent from the State, unknown, or the owner of a contingent or uncertain interest, a Superior judge may, on the application of either party, cause the notice to be given of the application as ~~he or she~~ the judge may prescribe, and after proof ~~thereof~~ of the application, the judge may appoint three disinterested persons to examine the property to be taken, or damaged by the municipal corporation.

(b) After being duly sworn, the commissioners shall, upon due notice to all parties in interest, view the premises, hear the parties in respect to the property, and shall assess and award to the owners and persons so interested just damages for any injury sustained and make report in writing to the judge.

(c) In determining damages resulting from the taking or use of property under the provisions of this chapter, the added value, if any, to the remaining property or right ~~therein~~ in property that inures directly to the owner ~~thereof~~ as a result of the taking or use as distinguished from the general public benefit, shall be considered.

(d) The judge may ~~thereupon~~ accept the report, unless just cause is shown to the contrary, and order the municipal corporation to pay the same in the time and manner as the judge may prescribe, in full compensation for the property taken, or the injury done by the municipal corporation, or the judge may reject or recommit the report if the ends of justice so require. On compliance with the order, the municipal corporation may proceed with the construction of its work without liability for further claim for damages. In ~~his or her~~ the judge's discretion, the judge may award costs in the proceeding. Appeals from the order may be taken to the Supreme Court under 12 V.S.A. chapter 102.

§ ~~3610~~ 3612. RECORD

Within 60 days after the taking of any property, franchise, easement, or right under the provisions of this chapter, ~~such the~~ municipal corporation shall file a description ~~thereof of the property~~ in the office of the clerk ~~wherein~~ where the land records are required by law to be kept.

§ ~~3611~~ 3613. CONTRACT FOR SEWAGE DISPOSAL

(a) ~~Such A~~ municipal corporation may contract with the State, the federal government, or any appropriate agency ~~thereof, of the State or federal government;~~ any town, city, or village; any corporation; and any individuals to make disposal of sewage or stormwater for ~~such the~~ other town, city, village, corporation, or individuals. ~~Such~~ When consistent with State or federal law, the municipal corporation may make sale of sludge or fertilizer byproducts incident to sewage disposal, and the proceeds from the sale thereof shall be turned over to the treasury of ~~such the~~ sewage disposal district system and credited ~~therein~~ as is other income derived under the authority of this chapter.

* * *

§ ~~3612~~ 3614. CHARGES; ENFORCEMENT

(a) ~~The owner of any tenement, house, building, or lot shall be liable for the sewage disposal charge as hereinafter defined. Such sewage disposal charge~~ A property owner or group of property owners using the sewage system shall be liable for the rent fixed by the board pursuant to this chapter. The charges, rates, or rents for the sewage system shall be a lien upon the real estate furnished with such service in the same manner and to the same effect as taxes are a lien upon real estate under 32 V.S.A. § 5061 and shall be an assessment enforceable under the procedures in subsections subsection (b), (c), or (d) of this section, or a combination of these procedures.

* * *

§ ~~3613~~ 3615. TAXES, BONDS

For the purpose of adequately making disposal of sewage within its boundaries; successfully organizing, establishing, and operating its sewage plant, sewage disposal plant, or some form of sewage treatment plant; and making ~~such~~ improvements as may be necessary, a municipal corporation may ~~from time to time~~:

(1) purchase, take, and hold real and personal estate;

(2) borrow money;

(3) levy, and collect taxes upon the ratable estate of the municipal corporation necessary for the payment of municipal corporation sewage and sewage disposal expenses and indebtedness;

(4) issue for the purposes ~~hereof~~ of this section evidences of indebtedness pursuant to chapter 53, subchapter 2 of this title or its negotiable bonds pursuant to chapter 53, subchapter 1 of this title; provided, however, that bonds so issued:

(1)(A) shall not be considered as indebtedness of ~~such~~ the municipal corporation limited by the provisions of section 1762 of this title;

(2)(B) may be paid in not more than 30 years from the date of issue notwithstanding the limitation of section 1759 of this title;

(3)(C) may be authorized by a majority of all the voters present and voting on the question at a meeting of ~~such~~ the municipal corporation held for ~~the~~ this purpose pursuant to chapter 53, subchapter 1 of this title notwithstanding any provisions of general or special law ~~which that~~ may require a greater vote, and may be so arranged that beginning with the first year in which principal is payable, the amount of principal and interest in any year shall be as nearly equal as is practicable according to the denomination in which ~~such~~ the bonds or other evidences of indebtedness are issued notwithstanding other permissible payment schedules authorized by section 1759 of this title.

§ ~~3614~~. BOARD OF SEWAGE DISPOSAL COMMISSIONERS

~~The selectboard of a town, the trustees of a village, the prudential committee of a fire or lighting district, or the mayor and board of aldermen of a city, shall constitute a board of sewage disposal commissioners.~~

§ ~~3615~~ 3616. RENTS; RATES

(a) ~~Such~~ A municipal corporation, through its board of ~~sewage disposal commissioners~~, may establish rates, rents, or charges to be called "sewage disposal charges," to be paid at ~~such times and in such manner~~ as the

~~commissioners board~~ may prescribe. The ~~commissioners board~~ may establish annual charges separately for bond repayment, fixed operations and maintenance costs (~~not dependent on actual use~~), and variable operations and maintenance costs dependent on flow.

(b) ~~Such~~ The rates, rents, or charges may be based upon:

(1) the metered consumption of water on premises connected with the sewer system, however, the ~~commissioners board~~ may determine no user will be billed for fixed operations and maintenance costs and bond payment less than the average ~~single family~~ single-family charge;

(2) the number of equivalent units connected with or served by the sewage system based upon their estimated flows compared to the estimated flows from a ~~single family~~ single-family dwelling, however, the ~~commissioners board~~ may determine no user will be billed less than the minimum charge determined for the ~~single family~~ single-family dwelling charge for fixed operations and maintenance costs and bond payment;

(3) the strength and flow where wastes stronger than household wastes are involved;

(4) the appraised value of premises, in the event that the commissioners shall determine the sewage disposal plant to be of general benefit to the municipality regardless of actual connection with the same;

(5) the commissioners' determination developed using any other equitable basis such as the number and kind of plumbing fixtures; the number of persons residing on or frequenting the premises served by those sewers; and the topography, size, type of use, or impervious area of any premises;

(6) for groundwater, surface, or stormwater an equivalent residential unit based on an average area of impervious surface on residential property within the municipality; or

(7) any combination of these bases, ~~so long as~~ provided the combination is equitable.

(~~b~~)(c) The basis for establishing ~~sewer disposal~~ rates, rents, or charges shall be reviewed annually by ~~sewage disposal commissioners~~ the board. No premises otherwise exempt from taxation, including premises owned by the State of Vermont, shall, by virtue of any ~~such~~ the exemption, be exempt from charges established ~~hereunder~~ under this section. The commissioners may change the rates ~~of such, rents, or charges from time to time~~ as may be reasonably required.

(d) Where one of the bases of ~~such a~~ rent, rate, or charge is the appraised value and the premises to be appraised are tax exempt, the ~~commissioners board~~ may cause the listers to appraise ~~such~~ the property, including State property, for the purpose of determining the ~~sewage disposal~~ the rates, rents, or charges. The right of appeal from ~~such~~ the appraisal shall be the same as provided in 32 V.S.A. chapter 131. The Commissioner of Finance and Management is authorized to issue ~~his or her~~ warrants for ~~sewage disposal rates, rents, or charges~~ against State property and transmit to the State Treasurer who shall draw a voucher in payment ~~thereof~~ of the rates, rents, or charges. No charge so established and no tax levied under the provisions of section ~~3613~~ 3615 of this title shall be considered to be a part of any tax authorized to be assessed by the legislative body of any municipality for general purposes, but shall be in addition to any such tax so authorized to be assessed.

(e) ~~Sewage disposal~~ Rates, rents, or charges established in accord with this section may be assessed by the board ~~of sewage disposal commissioners~~ as provided in ~~section 3614~~ of this title to derive the revenue required to pay pollution charges assessed against a municipal corporation under 10 V.S.A. § ~~1265~~ 1263.

(e)(f) When a ~~sewage disposal rate, rent, or~~ charge established under this section for the management of stormwater is applied to property owned, controlled, or managed by the Agency of Transportation, the charge shall not exceed the highest rate category applicable to other properties in the municipality, and the Agency of Transportation shall receive a 35 percent credit on the charge. The Agency of Transportation shall receive no other credit on the charge from the municipal corporation.

§ ~~3616~~ 3617. DUTIES; USE OF PROCEEDS

(a) ~~Such sewage disposal commissioners shall have the supervision of such municipal sewage disposal department, and shall make and establish all needful rates for charges, rules, and regulations for its control and operation including the right to require any individual, person, or corporation to connect to such the municipal system for the purposes of abating pollution of the waters of the State. Such commissioners may appoint or remove a superintendent at their pleasure. The charges and receipts of such the department shall only be used and applied to pay the interest and principal of the sewage disposal bonds of such the municipal corporation as well as, the expense of maintenance and operation of the sewage disposal department system, or other expenses of the sewage system.~~

(b) ~~These~~ The charges and receipts also may be used to develop a dedicated fund that may be created by the ~~commissioners board~~ to finance major rehabilitation, major maintenance, and upgrade costs for the sewer system. This fund may be established by an annual set-aside of up to 15 percent of the normal operations, maintenance, and bond payment costs, except that with respect to subsurface leachfield systems, the annual set-aside may equal up to 100 percent of these costs. The fund shall not exceed the estimated future major rehabilitation, major maintenance, or upgrade costs for the sewer system. Any dedicated fund shall be insured at least to the level provided by FDIC and withdrawals shall be made only for the purposes for which the fund was established. Any ~~such~~ dedicated fund may be established and controlled in accord with section 2804 of this title or may be established by act of the legislative body of the municipality. Funds so established shall meet the requirements of subdivision 4756(a)(4) of this title.

(c) Where the municipal legislative body establishes ~~such~~ a dedicated fund pursuant to this section, it shall first adopt a municipal ordinance authorizing and controlling ~~such~~ the funds. ~~Such~~ The ordinance and any local policies governing the funds must conform to the requirements of this section.

(d) The charges, receipts, and revenue may also be used for stormwater management, control, and treatment; flood resiliency; floodplain restoration; and other similar measures.

§ ~~3617~~ 3618. ORDINANCES

~~Such~~ The municipal corporation shall have the power to make, establish, alter, amend, or repeal ordinances, regulations, and bylaws relating to the matters contained in this chapter, consistent with law, and to impose penalties for the breach ~~thereof, of an ordinance~~ and enforce ~~the same~~ those penalties.

§ ~~3618~~ 3619. MEETINGS; VOTE

Any action taken by ~~such~~ a municipal corporation under the provisions of this chapter or relating to the matters ~~therein set forth~~ contained in this chapter, may be taken by vote of the legislative body of ~~such~~ the municipal corporation, excepting the issuance of bonds and, in municipalities wherein ~~such~~ the legislative body is not otherwise given the power to levy taxes, the levying of a tax under section ~~3613~~ 3615 of this title; provided, however, that no action shall be taken hereunder unless the construction of a sewage disposal plant shall have first been authorized by majority vote of the legal voters of ~~such~~ the municipal corporation attending a meeting ~~duly warned and holden~~ warned for that purpose.

* * *

Sec. 14. 24 V.S.A. § 3679 is amended to read:

§ 3679. FINANCES—SEWER RATES; APPLICATION OF REVENUE

(a) The board of sewer commissioners of a consolidated sewer district shall establish rates for the sewer service and all individuals, firms, and corporations whether private, public, or municipal shall pay to the treasurer of the district the rates established by the board. The manner of establishment of the rates shall be in accord with section ~~3615~~ 3616 of this title. The rates shall be so established as to provide revenue for the following purposes:

* * *

Sec. 15. REPEAL

24 V.S.A. chapter 97 (sewage system) is repealed.

* * * Creation of the Urban Search and Rescue Team * * *

Sec. 16. 20 V.S.A. § 50 is added to read:

§ 50. URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

(a) The Department of Public Safety is authorized to create the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team to provide for the rapid response of trained professionals to emergencies and other hazards occurring in the State. The Commissioner shall appoint a USAR Team program manager to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the USAR Team.

(b) The USAR Team program manager shall perform all the following duties:

(1) organize the State USAR Team to assist local first responders in response to emergencies and other hazards;

(2) hire persons for the USAR Team from fire, police, and emergency medical services and persons with specialty backgrounds in emergency response or search and rescue;

(3) coordinate the acquisition and maintenance of adequate vehicles and equipment for the USAR Team;

(4) ensure that USAR Team personnel are organized, trained, and exercised in accordance with the appropriate search and rescue standards or certifications;

(5) negotiate and enter into agreements with municipalities, municipal agencies that maintain swiftwater rescue teams, State-recognized swiftwater rescue teams, or other technical rescue teams to provide expert assistance and services to the USAR Team when necessary; and

(6) coordinate USAR Team participation in search and rescue operations under chapter 112 of this title.

(c) The Department of Public Safety may employ as many USAR Team responders as the Commissioner deems necessary as temporary State employees, who shall be compensated as such when authorized to respond to an emergency or hazard incident or to attend USAR Team training. State USAR Team responders, whenever acting as State agents in accordance with this section, shall be afforded all of the protections and immunities of State employees.

* * * Vermont-211 Information Privacy * * *

Sec. 17. PUBLIC RECORDS ACT; VERMONT 211; CONFIDENTIALITY

Pursuant to Vermont's Public Records Act, personal information and lists of names within records created or acquired by Vermont 211 shall be exempt from public inspection or copying. Vermont 211 shall keep confidential any personal information acquired from victims of a natural disaster or all-hazard, as defined by 20 V.S.A. § 2. This section shall not be construed to prevent the limited disclosure of personal information for the purposes of coordinating relief work for individuals affected by a natural disaster or all-hazard.

* * * Emergency Communications * * *

Sec. 18. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION POLICY DURING EMERGENCY

The Department of Public Safety's Division of Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), in consultation with the Enhanced 911 Board, shall develop a policy for the use of E-911 databases that maintain callback numbers of subscribers to provide VT-Alerts more effectively and expeditiously during emergencies in order to reduce the risk of harm to persons and property. The Division shall issue its policy on or before July 1, 2025.

Sec. 19. 30 V.S.A. § 7055 is amended to read:

§ 7055. TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY ORIGINATING

CARRIER COORDINATION

(a) ~~Every telecommunications company under the jurisdiction of the Public Utility Commission~~ originating carrier offering access to the public switched telephone network shall make available, in accordance with rules adopted by the Public Utility Commission requirements established by the Federal Communications Commission, the universal emergency telephone number 911 for use by the public in seeking assistance from fire, police, medical, and other emergency service providers through a public safety answering point and shall

deliver their customers' 911 calls to the point of interconnection defined by the Board.

(b) ~~Every local exchange telecommunications provider~~ originating carrier shall provide the ANI, if applicable, and any other information required by rules adopted under section 7053 of this title to the Board, or to any administrator of the ~~Enhanced 911 database~~ databases, solely for purposes of maintaining the ~~Enhanced 911 database~~ databases and for purposes outlined in subdivisions 7059(a)(1)(B) and (D) of this title, unless such information is provided by submission to the Vermont 911 ALI database, in which case the information may also be used for the purposes outlined in subdivision 7059(a)(1)(A) of this title. Each such provider shall be responsible for updating the information at a frequency specified by such rules. All persons receiving confidential information under this ~~section~~ subsection, as defined by the ~~Public Utility Commission~~ section 7059 of this title, shall use it solely for the purposes of ~~providing emergency 911 services, specified in subdivision 7059(a)(1) of this title~~ and shall not disclose such confidential information for any other purpose.

(c) ~~Each local exchange telecommunications company, cellular company, and mobile or personal communications service company~~ originating carrier providing services within the State shall designate a person to coordinate with and provide all relevant information to the Enhanced 911 Board and ~~Public Utility Commission~~ in carrying out the purposes of the chapter.

(d) ~~Wire line and nonwire cellular~~ Originating carriers certificated to provide service in the State shall ~~provide ANI signaling which identifies geographical location as well as cell site address for cellular 911 calls. Personal communications networks and any future mobile or personal communications systems shall also be required to identify the location of the caller. The telephone company shall provide ANI signaling which identifies the name of the carrier and identify the type of service as cellular, mobile, or personal communications as part of the ALI along with a screen message that advises the call answerer to verify the location of the reported emergency. Telecommunication providers of mobile wireless, IP-enabled, and other communication services which have systems with the capability to send data related to the location of the caller with the call or transmission instead of relying on location data otherwise contained in the ALI database shall provide this data with calls or transmissions for the sole purpose of enabling the emergency 911 system to locate an individual seeking emergency services. Location data shall be provided in accordance with relevant national standards for next generation 9-1-1 technology transmit with each 911 call available ANI or pseudo-Automatic Number Identification (p-ANI) that can be used to query the Enhanced 911 or third-party databases to provide the Automatic Location~~

Identification as defined by standards approved by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA). Originating carriers with the capability to provide location and caller data with the call shall do so in accordance with the approved i3 Standards for Next Generation 9-1-1.

(e) Each local exchange telecommunications provider in the State shall file with the Public Utility Commission tariffs for each service element necessary for the provision of Enhanced 911 services. The Public Utility Commission shall review each company's proposed tariff, and shall ensure that tariffs for each necessary basic service element are effective within six months of after filing. The Department of Public Service, by rule or emergency rule, may establish the basic service elements that each company must provide for in tariffs. Such tariffs must be filed with the Public Utility Commission within 60 days after the basic service elements are established by the Department of Public Service.

(f) As used in this section:

(1) "Incumbent local exchange carrier" has the same meaning as in 47 U.S.C. § 251(h) and includes rural local exchange carriers.

(2) "Originating carrier" or "originating service provider" means an entity that provides voice services to a subscriber and includes incumbent local exchange carriers operating in Vermont.

Sec. 20. ENHANCED 911 BOARD TARIFFS; REPORT

On or before January 15, 2025, the Enhanced 911 Board shall report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations on current local exchange telecommunications tariffs, and, in particular, evaluating existing tariffs permitted pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 7055, determining actual costs for the provision of the service elements, and comparing those tariffs to similar cost recovery mechanisms in other states.

* * * Language Assistance Services for State Emergency

Communications * * *

Sec. 21. 20 V.S.A. § 4 is added to read:

§ 4. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES FOR STATE EMERGENCY

COMMUNICATIONS

(a) If an all-hazards event occurs, the Vermont Emergency Management Division shall ensure that language assistance services are available for all State communications regarding the all-hazards event, including relevant press conferences and emergency alerts, as soon as practicable. Language assistance

services shall be provided for:

- (1) individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind; and
- (2) individuals with limited English proficiency.

(b) As used in this section, an “individual with limited English proficiency” means a person who does not speak English as the person’s primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

(c) Annually, the Vermont Emergency Management Division shall hold a public meeting with members of the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council; the Office of Racial Equity; the Vermont Association of Broadcasters; and other relevant stakeholders to review the adequacy and efficacy of the provision and distribution of language assistance services of emergency communications over mass communication platforms to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind as well as individuals with limited English language proficiency.

Sec. 22. [Deleted.]

Sec. 23. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES FOR EMERGENCY
COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Language Assistance Services for Emergency Communications Working Group, consisting of staff at the Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) Division and the Office of Racial Equity, who will collaborate with the Vermont Association of Broadcasters; the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council; organizations that represent language service providers; and other relevant stakeholders.

(b) Duties. The Working Group shall:

(1) develop best practices for the provision of language assistance services in emergency communications during and after all-hazards events, as defined in 2 V.S.A. § 2;

(2) identify geographical areas within the State with the greatest needs for language assistance services during and after all-hazards events; and

(3) analyze and make recommendations on the appropriate uses of technologies for providing these services, including tools such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and Picture-in-Picture (PIP) techniques and automated language translation services or machine translation.

(c) Report. On or before December 15, 2024, the Working Group shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

(d) Prospective repeal. The Working Group shall cease to exist on June 30, 2025.

* * * Post-Secondary Disaster Management Programs * * *

Sec. 24. POST-SECONDARY DISASTER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

REPORT

On or before February 15, 2025, the President or designee for the Vermont State University and the President or designee for the University of Vermont shall each submit a written report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations examining the creation of post-secondary disaster management programs, including the associated costs, projected enrollments, and aspects of curricula.

* * * Emergency Powers of the Governor and Emergency Management * * *

Sec. 25. 20 V.S.A. § 1 is amended to read:

§ 1. PURPOSE AND POLICY

(a) Because of the increasing possibility of the occurrence of disasters or emergencies of unprecedented size and destructiveness resulting from all-hazards and in order to ensure that preparation of this State will be adequate to deal with such disasters or emergencies; to provide for the common defense; to protect the public peace, health, and safety; and to preserve the lives and property of the people of the State, it is found and declared to be necessary:

(1) to create a State emergency management agency, and to authorize the creation of local and regional organizations for emergency management;

(2) to confer upon the Governor and upon the executive heads or legislative branches of the towns and cities of the State the emergency powers provided pursuant to this chapter;

(3) to provide for the rendering of mutual aid among the towns and cities of the State; with other states and Canada; and with the federal government with respect to the carrying out of emergency management functions; and

(4) to authorize the establishment of organizations and ~~the taking of steps as necessary and appropriate~~ to carry out the provisions of this chapter as necessary and appropriate.

* * *

Sec. 26. 20 V.S.A. § 8 is amended to read:

§ 8. GENERAL POWERS OF GOVERNOR

* * *

(b) In performing the duties under this chapter, the Governor is further authorized and empowered:

* * *

(3) Inventories, training, mobilization. In accordance with the plan and program for the emergency management of the State:

(A) to ascertain the requirements of the State or the municipalities for food ~~or~~, water, fuel, clothing, or other necessities of life in any all-hazards event and to plan for and procure supplies, medicines, materials, and equipment for the purposes set forth in this chapter;

* * *

(C) to institute training programs and public information programs, and to take all other preparatory steps, including the partial or full mobilization of emergency management organizations in advance of actual disaster, to ensure the furnishing of adequately trained and equipped forces of first responders and other emergency management personnel in time of need.

* * *

(8) Mutual aid agreements with other states. On behalf of this State, to enter into reciprocal aid agreements under this chapter and pursuant to compacts with other states and the federal government or a province of a foreign country under such terms as the Congress of the United States may prescribe. These mutual aid arrangements shall be limited to the furnishing or exchange of food, water, fuel, clothing, medicine, and other supplies; engineering services; emergency housing; police services; National Guard ~~or State Guard~~ units while under the control of the State; health; medical and related services; fire fighting, rescue, transportation, and construction services and equipment; personnel necessary to provide or conduct these services; and other supplies, equipment, facilities, personnel, and services as needed; and the reimbursement of costs and expenses for equipment, supplies, personnel, and similar items for mobile support units, ~~fire fighting~~ firefighting, and police units and health units. The mutual aid agreements shall be made on such terms

and conditions as the Governor deems necessary.

* * *

Sec. 27. 20 V.S.A. § 9 is amended to read:

§ 9. EMERGENCY POWERS OF GOVERNOR

Subject to the provisions of this chapter, in the event of an all-hazards event in or directed upon the United States or Canada that causes or may cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property within the State in any manner, the Governor may ~~proclaim~~ declare a state of emergency within the entire State or any portion or portions of the State. Thereafter, the Governor shall have and may exercise for as long as the Governor determines the emergency to exist the following additional powers within such area or areas:

(1) To enforce all laws and rules relating to emergency management and to assume direct operational control of all first responders, other emergency management personnel, and ~~helpers~~ volunteers in the affected area or areas.

* * *

Sec. 28. 20 V.S.A. § 11 is amended to read:

§ 11. ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY POWERS

In the event of an all-hazards event, the Governor may exercise any or all of the following additional powers:

(1) To authorize any department or agency of the State to lease or lend, on such terms and conditions and for ~~such a period as he or she deems necessary~~ related to the declaration of emergency to promote the public welfare and protect the interests of the State, any real or personal property of the State government, ~~or authorize the temporary transfer or employment of personnel of the State government to or by the U.S. Armed Forces.~~

(2) To enter into a contract on behalf of the State for the lease or loan, on such terms and conditions and for ~~such period as he or she~~ the Governor deems necessary to promote the public welfare and protect the interests of the State, of any real or personal property of the State government, or the temporary transfer or employment of personnel thereof to any town or city of the State. ~~The chief executive or, the chair or president of the legislative branch, or the emergency management director~~ of the town or city is authorized for and in the name of the town or city to enter into the contract with the Governor for the leasing or lending of the property and personnel, and ~~the chief executive or, the chair or president of the legislative branch, or the emergency management director~~ of the town or city may equip, maintain, utilize, and operate such property ~~except newspapers and other publications~~

news outlets, radio stations, places of worship and assembly, and other facilities for the exercise of constitutional freedom, and employ necessary personnel in accordance with the purposes for which such contract is executed; ~~and may do all things and perform all acts necessary to effectuate the purpose for which the contract was entered into.~~

* * *

(5) To make compensation for the property seized, taken, or condemned on the following basis:

(A) ~~In case~~ Whenever the Governor deems it advisable for the State to take property is taken for temporary use or to take property permanently, the Governor, at the time of the taking, shall fix the amount of compensation to be paid for the property; ~~and in.~~ In case the property is taken for temporary use and returned to the owner in a damaged condition or shall not be returned to the owner, the Governor shall fix the amount of compensation to be paid for the damage ~~or failure to return.~~

(B) Whenever the Governor deems it advisable for the State to temporarily or permanently take title to property taken under this section, the Governor shall ~~forthwith cause~~ notify the owner of the property ~~to be notified~~ of the taking in writing by registered mail or in person, ~~postage prepaid~~, and ~~forthwith cause to be filed~~ shall file a copy of the notice with the Secretary of State.

~~(B)~~(C) Any owner of property of which possession has been either temporarily or permanently taken under the provisions of this chapter to whom no award has been made or who is dissatisfied with the amount awarded ~~him~~ ~~or her~~ by the Governor may file a petition in the Superior Court within the county wherein the property was situated at the time of taking to have the amount to which ~~he or she~~ the owner is entitled by way of damages or compensation determined, and either the petitioner or the State shall have the right to have the amount of such damages or compensation fixed after hearing by three disinterested appraisers appointed by the court, and who shall operate under substantive and administrative procedure to be established by the Superior judges. If the ~~petitioner~~ owner of the property is dissatisfied with the award of the appraisers, ~~he or she~~ the owner may appeal the award to the Superior Court and thereafter have a trial by jury to determine the amount of the damages or compensation. The court costs of a proceeding brought under this section by the owner of the property shall be paid by the State, and the fees and expenses of any attorney for the owner shall also be paid by the State after allowances by the court in which the petition is brought in an amount determined by the court. The statute of limitations shall not apply to proceedings brought by owners of property under this section for and during

the time that any court having jurisdiction over the proceedings is prevented from holding its usual and stated sessions due to conditions resulting from emergencies described in this chapter.

(6) To perform and exercise other functions, powers, and duties as necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the civilian population.

Sec. 29. 20 V.S.A. § 13 is amended to read:

§ 13. TERMINATION OF EMERGENCIES

The Governor:

(1) May terminate by ~~proclamation~~ declaration the emergencies provided for in sections 9 and 11 of this title; provided, however, that no emergencies shall be terminated prior to the termination of such emergency as provided in federal law.

(2) May declare the state of emergency terminated in any area affected by an all-hazards event.

(3) Upon receiving notice that a majority of the legislative body of a municipality affected by a natural disaster no longer desires that the state of emergency continue within its municipality, ~~shall~~ may declare the state of emergency terminated within that particular municipality. Upon the termination of the state of emergency, the functions as set forth in section 9 of this title shall cease, and the local authorities shall resume control.

Sec. 30. 20 V.S.A. § 17 is amended to read:

§ 17. GIFT, GRANT, OR LOAN

(a) Federal. ~~Whenever~~ Subject to the provisions of subsection (c) of this section, whenever the federal government or any agency or officer of the federal government offers to the State, or through the State to any town or city within Vermont, services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan for purposes of emergency management, the State, acting through the Governor in coordination with the Department of Public Safety, or such town or city acting with the consent of the Governor and through its executive officer or legislative branch, may accept the offer, and upon such acceptance, the Governor or the executive officer or legislative branch of the political subdivision may authorize any officer of the State or of the political subdivision, as the case may be, to receive the services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds on behalf of the State or the political subdivisions, and subject to the terms of the offer and rules, if any, of the agency making the offer. Whenever a federal grant is contingent upon a State or local contribution, or both, the Department of Public Safety and the political

subdivision shall determine whether the grant shall be accepted and, if accepted, the respective shares to be contributed by the State and town or city concerned.

(b) Private. Whenever Subject to the provisions of subsection (c) of this section, whenever any person, firm, or corporation offers to the State or to any town or city in Vermont services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan, for purposes of emergency management, the State, acting through the Governor, or the political subdivision, acting through its executive officer or legislative branch, may accept the offer, and upon such acceptance, the Governor or executive officer or legislative branch of the political subdivision may authorize any officer of the State or the political subdivision, as the case may be, to receive the services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds on behalf of the State or the political subdivision, and subject to the terms of the offer.

(c)(1) Any services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan for purposes of emergency management, accepted by the Governor pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of this section shall be accepted in accordance with the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 5.

(2)(A) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Governor shall have the sole authority to accept services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan for purposes of emergency management pursuant to subsections (a) or (b) of this section, or both, if there exists a reasonable expectation that without the acceptance the all-hazards event will imminently cause bodily harm, loss of life, or significant property damage within the State.

(B) As soon as practicable after an acceptance pursuant to subsection (A) of this subsection (2), the Department of Finance and Management shall provide the Joint Fiscal Committee and Legislative Joint Fiscal Office a report detailing the acceptance and shall include information with respect to the following items:

(i) the circumstances leading the Governor to reasonably expect that without the acceptance the all-hazards event would have imminently caused bodily harm, loss of life, or significant property damage within the State;

(ii) the source and value;

(iii) the legal and referenced title, in the case of a grant;

(iv) the costs, direct and indirect, for the present and future years;

(v) the receiving department or program, or both; and

(vi) a brief statement of purpose.

Sec. 31. 20 V.S.A. § 26 is amended to read:

§ 26. CHANGE OF VENUE BECAUSE OF ~~ENEMY ATTACK~~ AN ALL-
HAZARDS EVENT

In the event that the place where a civil action or a criminal prosecution is required by law to be brought has become and remains unsafe because of an attack upon the United States or Canada or an all-hazards event, such action or prosecution may be brought in or, if already pending, may be transferred to the Superior Court in an unaffected unit and there tried in the place provided by law for such court.

Sec. 32. 20 V.S.A. § 30 is amended to read:

§ 30. STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMISSION; CREATION

(a) The State Emergency Response Commission is created within the Department of Public Safety. The Commission shall consist of ~~17~~18 members: eight ex officio members, including the Commissioner of Public Safety, the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Secretary of Transportation, the Commissioner of Health, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, the Commissioner of Labor, the Director of Fire Safety, and the Director of Emergency Management, or designees; and ~~nine~~ ten public members, including a representative from each of the following: local government, the local emergency planning committee, a regional planning commission, the fire service, law enforcement, public works, emergency medical service, a hospital, a transportation entity required under EPCRA to report chemicals to the State Emergency Response Commission, and another entity required to report extremely hazardous substances under EPCRA.

(b) The ~~nine~~ ten public members shall be appointed ~~by the Governor~~ for staggered three-year terms as described in this subsection.

(1) Three public members, appointed by the Speaker of the House.

(2) Three public members, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees.

(3) Four public members, appointed by the Governor.

(4) When the seat of a public member is vacated, the replacement member shall be appointed on a rotating basis starting with the Speaker of the House, with the next appointment to be made by the Senate Committee on Committees, and then the next appointment to be made by the Governor, and then beginning again.

(c) The Governor shall appoint the Chair of the Commission.

~~(e)~~(d) Members of the Commission, except State employees who are not otherwise compensated as part of their employment and who attend meetings, shall be entitled to a per diem and expenses as provided in 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

Sec. 33. 20 V.S.A. § 34 is amended to read:

§ 34. TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR DISASTER VICTIMS

(a) Whenever the Governor ~~has proclaimed a disaster~~ declares an emergency under the laws of this State, or the President has declared an emergency or ~~a major disaster~~ an all-hazards event to exist in this State, the Governor is authorized:

(1) To enter into purchase, lease, or other arrangements with any agency of the United States for temporary housing units to be occupied by disaster victims and to make such units available to any political subdivision of the State.

(2) To assist any political subdivision of this State that is the locus of temporary housing for disaster victims to acquire sites necessary for the temporary housing and ~~to do all things required~~ to prepare the site to receive and utilize temporary housing units by:

(A) advancing or lending funds available to the Governor from any appropriation made by the General Assembly or from any other source;₂

(B) “passing through” funds made available by any agency, public or private;₂ or

(C) becoming a co-partner with the political subdivision for the execution and performance of any temporary housing for disaster victims project and for such purposes to pledge the credit of the State on such terms as the Governor deems appropriate having due regard for current debt transactions of the State.

(b) ~~Under rules adopted by the Governor, to~~ During a declared state of emergency, the Governor may, by order or rule, temporarily suspend or modify for not more than 60 days any law or rule pertaining to public health, safety, zoning, or transportation ~~(within or across the State), or other requirement of law or rules within Vermont when by proclamation~~ if, the Governor deems the suspension or modification essential to provide temporary housing for disaster victims.

(c) Any political subdivision of this State is expressly authorized to acquire, temporarily or permanently, by purchase, lease, or otherwise, sites required for installation of temporary housing units for disaster victims, and to

enter into whatever arrangements are necessary to prepare or equip such sites to utilize the housing units, including the purchase of temporary housing units and payment of transportation charges.

~~(d) The Governor is authorized to adopt rules as necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

(e) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to limit the Governor's authority to apply for, administer, and expend any grants, gifts, or payments in aid of disaster prevention, preparedness, response, or recovery.

~~(f) As used in this chapter, "major disaster," "emergency," and "temporary housing" have the same meaning as in the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, P.L. 93-288. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 34. 20 V.S.A. § 39 is amended to read:

§ 39. FEES TO THE HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES FUND

(a) Every person required to report the use or storage of hazardous chemicals or substances pursuant to EPCRA shall pay the following annual fees for each hazardous chemical or substance, as defined by the State Emergency Response Commission, that is present at the facility:

- (1) \$40.00 for quantities between 100 and 999 pounds.
- (2) \$60.00 for quantities between 1,000 and 9,999 pounds.
- (3) \$100.00 for quantities between 10,000 and 99,999 pounds.
- (4) \$290.00 for quantities between 100,000 and 999,999 pounds.
- (5) \$880.00 for quantities exceeding 999,999 pounds.

(6) An additional fee of \$250.00 will be assessed for each extremely hazardous chemical or substance as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 11002.

(b) The fee shall be paid to the Commissioner of Public Safety and shall be deposited into the Hazardous Chemical and Substance Emergency Response Fund.

(c) The following are exempted from paying the fees required by this section but shall comply with the reporting requirements of this chapter:

- (1) municipalities and other political subdivisions;
- (2) State agencies;
- (3) persons engaged in farming as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001; and
- (4) nonprofit corporations.

(d) No person shall be required to pay a fee for a chemical or substance that has been determined to be an economic poison as defined in 6 V.S.A. § 911 or for a fertilizer or agricultural lime as defined in 6 V.S.A. § 363 and for which a registration or tonnage fee has been paid to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets pursuant to 6 V.S.A. chapter 28 or 81.

(e) The State or any political subdivision, including any municipality, fire district, emergency medical service, or incorporated village, is authorized to recover any and all reasonable direct expenses incurred as a result of the response to and recovery of a hazardous chemical or substance incident from the person or persons responsible for the incident. All funds collected by the State under this subsection shall be deposited into the Hazardous Chemical and Substance Emergency Response Fund created pursuant to subsection 38(b) of this chapter. The Attorney General shall act on behalf of the State to recover these expenses. The State or political subdivision shall be awarded costs and reasonable attorney's fees that are incurred as a result of exercising the provisions of this subsection.

(f)(1) The Department of Public Safety shall have authority to inspect the premises and records of any employer to ensure compliance with the provisions of this chapter and the rules adopted under this chapter.

(2) A person who violates any provision of this chapter or any rule adopted under this chapter shall be fined not more than \$1,000.00 for each violation. Each day a violation continues shall be deemed to be a separate violation.

(3) The Attorney General may bring an action for injunctive relief in the Superior Court of the county in which a violation occurs to compel compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

Sec. 35. REPEAL

20 V.S.A. § 40 (enforcement) is repealed.

Sec. 36. [Deleted.]

Sec. 37. [Deleted.]

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 38. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024, except that Sec. 21 (20 V.S.A. § 4) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Rep. Demrow of Corinth, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the report of Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs be amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 4a, 10 V.S.A. § 10, by striking out subsection (d) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (d) to read as follows:

(d) Annually, on or before November 15, the Treasurer shall submit a report detailing the activities, financing, and accounting of any credit facilities created pursuant to subsection (c) of this section during the preceding calendar year to the Governor; the House Committees on Appropriations, on Commerce and Economic Development, and on Ways and Means; and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and on Finance.

Second: By adding a new section to be Sec. 4b to read as follows:

Sec. 4b. TREASURER CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING
COORDINATION; REPORT

(a) The Treasurer may use funds appropriated in fiscal year 2025 to coordinate climate infrastructure financing efforts within the State, including use for administrative costs and third-party consultations. The Treasurer shall seek to create a framework for effective collaboration among State organizations, agencies, and financial instrumentalities to maximize the amount of federal funds the State may receive and to effectively coordinate the deployment of these funds.

(b) On or before December 15, 2024, the Treasurer shall submit a report detailing the status of coordination efforts described in subsection (a) of this section and any recommendations regarding legislation for State climate infrastructure financing to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Commerce and Economic Development, on Environment and Energy, on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, on Finance, on Government Operations, and on Natural Resources and Energy.

Rep. Harrison of Chittenden, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs when further amended as recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs was amended as recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, as amended, was agreed to and third reading ordered.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 55

Rep. McCarthy of St. Albans City, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to authorizing public bodies to meet electronically under Vermont's Open Meeting Law

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that regardless of the form and format of a meeting, whether in-person, remote, or a hybrid fashion, that:

(1) meetings of public bodies be fully accessible to members of the public who would like to attend and participate, as well as to members of those public bodies who have been appointed or elected to serve their communities;

(2) subject to any exceptions in the Open Meeting Law, the deliberations and decisions of public bodies be transparent to members of the public; and

(3) the meetings of public bodies be conducted using standard rules and best practices for both meeting format and method of delivery.

Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. § 310 is amended to read:

§ 310. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Advisory body” means a public body that does not have supervision, control, or jurisdiction over legislative, quasi-judicial, tax, or budgetary matters.

(2) “Business of the public body” means the public body’s governmental functions, including any matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.

~~(2)~~(3) “Deliberations” means weighing, examining, and discussing the reasons for and against an act or decision, but expressly excludes the taking of evidence and the arguments of parties.

(4) “Hybrid meeting” means a meeting that includes both a designated physical meeting location and a designated electronic meeting platform.

~~(3)~~(5)(A) “Meeting” means a gathering of a quorum of the members of a public body for the purpose of discussing the business of the public body or for the purpose of taking action.

* * *

~~(4)~~(6) “Public body” means any board, council, or commission of the State or one or more of its political subdivisions, any board, council, or commission of any agency, authority, or instrumentality of the State or one or more of its political subdivisions, or any committee or subcommittee of any of the foregoing boards, councils, or commissions, except that “public body” does not include councils or similar groups established by the Governor for the sole purpose of advising the Governor with respect to policy.

~~(5)~~(7) “Publicly announced” means that notice is given to an editor, publisher, or news director of a newspaper or radio station serving the area of the State in which the public body has jurisdiction, and to any person who has requested under subdivision 312(c)(5) of this title to be notified of special meetings.

~~(6)~~(8) “Quasi-judicial proceeding” means a proceeding ~~which~~ that is:

* * *

(9) “Undue hardship” means an action required to achieve compliance would require significant difficulty or expense in light of factors including the overall size of the entity, sufficient personnel and staffing availability, the entity’s budget, and the costs associated with compliance.

Sec. 3. 1 V.S.A. § 312 is amended to read:

§ 312. RIGHT TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF PUBLIC AGENCIES

(a)(1) All meetings of a public body are declared to be open to the public at all times, except as provided in section 313 of this title. No resolution, rule, regulation, appointment, or formal action shall be considered binding except as taken or made at such open meeting, except as provided under subdivision 313(a)(2) of this title. A meeting of a public body is subject to the public accommodation requirements of 9 V.S.A. chapter 139. A public body shall electronically record all public hearings held to provide a forum for public comment on a proposed rule, pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 840. The public shall have access to copies of such electronic recordings as described in section 316 of this title.

(2) Participation in meetings through electronic or other means.

* * *

(D) If a quorum or more of the members of a public body attend a meeting without being physically present at a designated meeting location, the agenda required under subsection (d) of this section shall designate at least one physical location where a member of the public can attend and participate in the meeting. At least one member of the public body, or at least one staff or designee of the public body, shall be physically present at each designated meeting location. The requirements of this subdivision (D) shall not apply to advisory bodies.

(3) State nonadvisory public bodies; hybrid meeting requirement. Any public body of the State, except advisory bodies and the Human Services Board, shall:

(A) hold all regular and special meetings in a hybrid fashion, which shall include both a designated physical meeting location and a designated electronic meeting platform;

(B) electronically record all meetings; and

(C) for a minimum of 30 days following the approval and posting of the official minutes for a meeting, retain the audiovisual recording and post the recording in a designated electronic location.

(4) State and local advisory bodies; electronic meetings without a physical meeting location. A quorum or more of the members of an advisory body may attend any meeting of the advisory body by electronic or other means without being physically present at or staffing a designated meeting location. A quorum or more of the members of any public body may attend an emergency meeting of the body by electronic or other means without being physically present at or staffing a designated meeting location.

(5) State nonadvisory public bodies; State and local advisory bodies; designating electronic platforms. State nonadvisory public bodies meeting in a hybrid fashion pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection and State and local advisory bodies meeting without a physical meeting location pursuant to subdivision (4) of this subsection shall designate and use an electronic platform that allows the direct access, attendance, and participation of the public, including access by telephone. The public body shall post information that enables the public to directly access the designated electronic platform and include this information in the published agenda or public notice for the meeting.

(6) Local nonadvisory public bodies; meeting recordings.

(A) A public body of a municipality or political subdivision, except advisory bodies, shall record, in audio or video form, any meeting of the public body and post a copy of the recording in a designated electronic

location for a minimum of 30 days following the approval and posting of the official minutes for a meeting.

(B) A municipality is exempt from subdivision (A) of this subdivision (6) if compliance would impose an undue hardship on the municipality.

(C) A municipality shall have the burden of proving that compliance under this section would impose an undue hardship on the municipality.

* * *

(j) Request for access.

(1) A resident of the geographic area in which the public body has jurisdiction, a member of a public body, or a member of the press may request that a public body designate a physical meeting location or provide electronic or telephonic access to a regular meeting, but not to a series of regular meetings, special meetings, emergency meetings, or field visits.

(2) The request shall be made in writing, as specified by the public body, not less than two business days before the date of the meeting. The public body shall not require the requestor to provide a basis for the request.

(3) The public body shall grant the request unless:

(A) there is an all-hazards event as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 2 or a state of emergency declared pursuant to 20 V.S.A. §§ 9 and 11;

(B) there is a local incident as defined in section 312a of this subchapter; or

(C) compliance would impose an undue hardship on the municipality.

(4) A public body shall have the burden of proving that compliance under subdivision (3) of this subsection would impose an undue hardship on the public body.

Sec. 4. COMMUNICATIONS UNION DISTRICTS; STATE NONADVISORY PUBLIC BODIES; DESIGNATED PHYSICAL MEETING LOCATION EXCEPTION

Until January 1, 2025, notwithstanding the provisions of 1 V.S.A. § 312(a)(3), communications union districts and State nonadvisory public bodies shall not be required to designate a physical meeting location for regular and special meetings or hold regular and special meetings in a hybrid fashion.

Sec. 5. 1 V.S.A. § 312(k) is added to read:

(k) Training.

(1) Annually, the following officers shall participate in a professional training that addresses the procedures and requirements of this subchapter:

(A) for municipalities and political subdivisions, the chair of the legislative body, town manager, and mayor; and

(B) for the State, the chair of any public body that is not an advisory body.

(2) The Secretary of State shall develop the training required by subdivision (1) of this subsection and make the training available to municipalities and political subdivisions and public bodies. The training may be in person, online, and synchronous or asynchronous.

Sec. 6. 1 V.S.A. § 312a is amended to read:

§ 312a. MEETINGS OF PUBLIC BODIES; STATE OF EMERGENCY

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Affected public body” means a public body:

(A) whose regular meeting location is located in an area affected by a hazard or local incident; and

(B) that cannot meet in a designated physical meeting location due to a declared state of emergency pursuant to 20 V.S.A. chapter 1 or local incident.

(2) “Directly impedes” means interferes or obstructs in a manner that makes it infeasible for a public body to meet either at a designated physical location or through electronic means.

(3) “Hazard” means an “all-hazards” as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 2(1).

(4) “Local incident” means a weather event, loss of power or telecommunication services, public health emergency, public safety threat, received threat that a member of the public body believes may place the member or another person in reasonable apprehension of death or serious bodily injury, or other event that directly impedes the ability of a public body to hold a meeting electronically or in a designated physical location.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivisions 312(a)(2)(D), (a)(3), and (c)(2) of this title, during a local incident or declared state of emergency under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1:

(1) A quorum or more of an affected public body may attend a regular, special, or emergency meeting by electronic or other means without designating a physical meeting location where the public may attend.

(2) The members and staff of an affected public body shall not be required to be physically present at a designated meeting location.

(3) An affected public body of a municipality may post any meeting agenda or notice of a special meeting in two publicly accessible designated electronic locations in lieu of the two designated public places in the municipality, or in a combination of a designated electronic location and a designated public place.

(c) Before a public body may meet under the authority provided in this section for meetings held during a local incident, the highest ranking elected or appointed officer of the public body shall make a formal written finding and announcement of the local incident, including the basis for the finding.

(d) Notwithstanding subdivision 312(a)(3) of this title, during a local incident that impedes an affected public body's ability to hold a meeting by electronic means, the affected public body may hold a meeting exclusively at a designated physical meeting location.

(e) When an affected public body meets electronically under subsection (b) of this section, the affected public body shall:

(1) use technology that permits the attendance and participation of the public through electronic or other means;

(2) allow the public to access the meeting by telephone; ~~and~~

(3) post information that enables the public to directly access and participate in meetings electronically and shall include this information in the published agenda for each meeting; and

(4) if applicable, publicly announce and post a notice that the meeting will not be held in a hybrid fashion and will be held either in a designated physical meeting location or through electronic means.

~~(d)~~(f) Unless unusual circumstances make it impossible for them to do so, the legislative body of each municipality and each school board shall record any meetings held pursuant to this section.

~~(e)~~(g) An affected public body of a municipality shall continue to post notices and agendas in or near the municipal clerk's office pursuant to subdivision 312(c)(2) of this title and shall provide a copy of each notice or agenda to the newspapers of general circulation for the municipality.

Sec. 7. 1 V.S.A. § 314 is amended to read:

§ 314. PENALTY AND ENFORCEMENT

* * *

(e) A municipality shall post on its website, if it maintains one:

(1) an explanation of the procedures for submitting notice of an Open Meeting Law violation to the public body or the Attorney General; and

(2) a copy of the text of this section.

Sec. 8. 17 V.S.A. § 2640 is amended to read:

§ 2640. ANNUAL MEETINGS

* * *

(b)(1) When a town so votes, it may thereafter start its annual meeting on any of the three days immediately preceding the first Tuesday in March at such time as it elects and may transact at that time any business not involving voting by Australian ballot or voting required by law to be by ballot and to be held on the first Tuesday in March. A meeting so started shall be adjourned until the first Tuesday in March.

(2) An informational meeting held in the three days preceding the first Tuesday in March pursuant to this subsection shall be video recorded and a copy of the recording shall be posted in a designated electronic location within 24 hours until the results of the annual meeting have been certified.

* * *

Sec. 9. 17 V.S.A. § 2680 is amended to read:

§ 2680. AUSTRALIAN BALLOT SYSTEM; GENERAL

* * *

(h) Hearing.

* * *

(2)(A) The hearing shall be held within the ~~40~~ 30 days preceding the meeting at which the Australian ballot system is to be used. The legislative body shall be responsible for the administration of this hearing, including the preparation of minutes.

* * *

(3) A hearing held pursuant to this subsection shall be video recorded and a copy of the recording shall be posted in a designated electronic location until the results of the meeting have been certified.

Sec. 10. WORKING GROUP ON PARTICIPATION AND ACCESSIBILITY
OF MUNICIPAL PUBLIC MEETINGS AND ELECTIONS;
REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Working Group on Participation and Accessibility of Municipal Public Meetings and Elections to study and make recommendations to:

(1) improve the accessibility of and participation in meetings of local public bodies, annual municipal meetings, and local elections; and

(2) increase transparency, accountability, and trust in government.

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

(1) two designees of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, who shall represent municipalities of differing populations and geographically diverse areas of the State;

(2) two designees of the Vermont Municipal Clerks' and Treasurers' Association, who shall represent municipalities of differing populations and geographically diverse areas of the State;

(3) one designee of the Vermont School Boards Association;

(4) one designee of Disability Rights Vermont;

(5) one designee of the Vermont Access Network;

(6) one member with expertise in remote and hybrid voting and meeting technology, appointed by the Secretary of State;

(7) the Chair of the Human Rights Commission or designee; and

(8) the Secretary of State or designee, who shall be Chair.

(c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall:

(1) recommend best practices for:

(A) running effective and inclusive meetings and maximizing participation and accessibility in electronic, hybrid, and in-person annual meetings and meetings of public bodies;

(B) the use of universal design for annual meetings and meetings of public bodies;

(C) training public bodies for compliance with the Open Meeting Law; and

(D) recording meetings of municipal public bodies and the means and timeline for posting those recordings for public access.

(2) report on the findings of the Civic Health Index study by the Secretary of State and how to reduce barriers to participation in public service;

(3) identify the technical assistance, equipment, and training necessary for municipalities to run effective and inclusive remote or hybrid public meetings;

(4) produce a guide for accessibility for polling and public meeting locations;

(5) study the feasibility of using electronic platforms to support remote attendance and voting at annual meetings;

(6) analyze voter turnout and the voting methods currently used throughout the State;

(7) investigate whether increased use of resources for participants such as child care, hearing devices, translators, transportation, food, and hybrid meetings could increase participation in local public meetings; and

(8) study other topics as determined by the group that could improve participation and access to local public meetings.

(d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Office of the Secretary of State. The Office of the Secretary of State may hire a consultant to provide assistance to the Working Group.

(e) Consultation. The Working Group shall consult with the Vermont Press Association, communications union districts, and other relevant stakeholders.

(f) Report. On or before November 1, 2025, the Working Group shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

(g) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of State shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur on or before September 1, 2024.

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

(3) The Working Group shall cease to exist on the date that it submits the report required by this section.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement. The members of the Working Group shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Sec. 11. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024, except that Sec. 4 (1 V.S.A. § 312(k)) shall take effect on January 1, 2025.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to updating Vermont’s Open Meeting Law”

Rep. Toleno of Brattleboro, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs agreed to, and third reading ordered.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 72

House bill, entitled

An act relating to a harm-reduction criminal justice response to drug use

Was taken up and, pending consideration of the Senate proposal of amendment, on motion of **Rep. Wood of Waterbury**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 204

Rep. Brady of Williston, for the Committee on Education, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Findings * * *

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) In its December 2023 report to the General Assembly, the Advisory Council on Literacy found the following:

(A) Explicit and systematic instruction on code-based and comprehension-based reading skills and needs-based support are the most effective literacy practices for the early grades.

(B) A strong focus is needed on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension for all students, and needs-based tiers and layers of support are critical for struggling learners.

(2) Reading instruction is interwoven into the principles of creating culturally responsive and inclusive environments for all students. The availability and use of texts that are culturally relevant and representative of historically underrepresented voices is critical to ensure that all students can connect their experiences to the text they are reading.

* * * Reading Assessment and Intervention * * *

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 2907 is added to read:

§ 2907. KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE-THREE READING

ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION

(a) The Agency of Education, in collaboration with the Council on Literacy, shall review, score, and publish guidance on universal reading screeners based on established criteria that are based on technical adequacy, attention to linguistic diversity, administrative usability, and valid measures of the developmental skills in early literacy, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The Agency shall include in its guidance instances in which schools can leverage assessments that meet overlapping requirements and guidelines to maximize the use of assessments that provide the necessary data to understand student needs while minimizing the number of assessments used and the disruption of instructional time.

(b) Each public and approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition shall screen all students in kindergarten through grade three, at least annually, using age and grade-level appropriate universal reading screeners. The universal screeners shall be given in accordance with best practices and the technical specifications of the specific screener used.

(c) If such screenings determine that a student is significantly below relevant benchmarks as determined by the screener's guidelines for age-level or grade-level typical development in specific literacy skills, the school shall determine which actions within the general education program will meet the student's needs, including differentiated or supplementary evidence-based reading instruction and ongoing monitoring of progress. Within 30 calendar days of a screening result that is significantly below the relevant benchmarks, the school shall inform the student's parent or guardian of the screening results and the school's response.

(d) Evidence-based reading instructional practices, programs, or interventions provided pursuant to subsection (c) of this section shall be effective, explicit, systematic, and consistent with federal and State guidance and shall address the foundational concepts of literacy proficiency, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Strategies such as the three-cueing system shall not be used in a manner that precedes or supplants decoding instruction.

(e)(1) Each supervisory union and approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition shall annually report to the Agency, in a format prescribed by the Agency, the following information and prior year performance, by school:

(A) the number and percentage of students in kindergarten through grade three performing below proficiency on local and statewide reading assessments, as applicable; and

(B) the universal reading screeners utilized.

(2) The Agency shall provide guidance to supervisory unions and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition on whether, and if so, how, the data provided pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection may be disaggregated based on poverty, the provision of special education services, or any other category the Agency deems relevant to understanding the status of the State's progress to improve literacy learning.

(f) On or before January 15 of each year, the Agency shall issue a written report to the Governor and the Senate and House Committees on Education on the status of State progress to improve literacy learning. The report shall include the information required pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 3. PARENTAL NOTIFICATION; AGENCY OF EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

On or before November 1, 2024, the Agency of Education shall develop and issue recommendations for the substance and form of the parental or

guardian notification required under 16 V.S.A. § 2907(c). The Agency's recommendations shall be consistent with applicable State and federal law as well as legislative intent.

Sec. 4. REVIEWED READING SCREENERS; AGENCY OF EDUCATION;
REPORT

On or before January 15, 2025, the Agency of Education shall submit a written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education with a list of the reviewed screening instruments it has published pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 2907. The Agency shall include any information it deems relevant to provide an understanding of the list of reviewed screening instruments.

Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 2903 is amended to read:

§ 2903. PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE; READING
INSTRUCTION

(a) Statement of policy. The ability to read is critical to success in learning. Children who fail to read by the end of the first grade will likely fall further behind in school. The personal and economic costs of reading failure are enormous both while the student remains in school and long afterward. All students need to receive systematic and explicit evidence-based reading instruction in the early grades from a teacher who is skilled in teaching the foundational components of reading through a variety of instructional strategies that take into account the different learning styles and language backgrounds of the students, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. ~~Some students may~~ Students who require intensive supplemental instruction tailored to the unique difficulties encountered shall be provided those additional supports by an appropriately licensed and trained education professional.

(b) Foundation for literacy. ~~The State Board~~ Agency of Education, in collaboration with the State Board of Education, the Agency of Human Services, higher education, literacy organizations, and others, shall develop a plan for establishing a comprehensive system of services for early education in ~~the first three grades~~ kindergarten through third grade to ensure that all students learn to read by the end of the third grade. The plan shall be updated at least once every five years following its initial submission in 1998 and shall apply to all public schools and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition.

(c) Reading instruction. A public school or approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition that offers instruction in grades kindergarten, one, two, or three shall provide ~~highly effective, research-based~~

systemic and explicit evidence-based reading instruction to all students. In addition, a school such schools shall provide:

(1) supplemental reading instruction to any enrolled student in grade four whose reading proficiency falls below third grade reading expectations, as defined under subdivision 164(9) of this title; proficiency standards for the student's grade level or whose reading proficiency prevents progress in school.

(2) supplemental reading instruction to any enrolled student in grades 5-12 whose reading proficiency creates a barrier to the student's success in school; and

(3) Schools shall provide support and information to the parents and legal guardians of such students regarding the student's current level of reading proficiency, which shall be based on valid and reliable assessments.

Sec. 6. APPROVED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL COMPLIANCE WITH
16 V.S.A. § 2903

Approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition shall comply with the requirements of 16 V.S.A. § 2903 (preventing early school failure; reading instruction) on or before July 1, 2025.

* * * Literacy Professional Development * * *

Sec. 7. 16 V.S.A. § 1710 is added to read:

§ 1710. LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) Each supervisory union and each approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition shall provide professional development to kindergarten through grade-three educators, to include all teachers and administrators, on implementing a reading screening assessment, interpreting the results, determining instructional practices for students, and communicating with families regarding screening results in a supportive way. The instructional practices included in the professional development provided pursuant to this section shall be evidence-based and effective and shall incorporate the foundational concepts of literacy proficiency, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

(b) Each supervisory union and approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition shall maintain a record of completion of professional development consistent with this section.

Sec. 8. RESULTS-ORIENTED PROGRAM APPROVAL

(a) On or before July 1, 2025, the Agency of Education shall submit recommendations to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators

on how to strengthen educator preparation programs' teaching of evidence-based literacy practices. The Agency shall also simultaneously communicate its recommendations to Vermont's educator preparation programs and submit its recommendations in writing to the Senate and House Committees on Education.

(b) On or before July 1, 2026, the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators shall consider the Agency's recommendations pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and, as appropriate, update the educator preparation requirements in Agency of Education, Licensing of Educators and the Preparation of Educational Professionals (5000) (CVR 022-000-010).

(c) As part of its review under subsection (a) of this section, the Agency shall make recommendations to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators regarding whether an additional mandatory examination is needed to assess candidates for educator licensure skills in mathematics and English language arts fundamentals, as well as candidates' understanding of the importance of evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy, beyond the requirements in Agency of Education, Licensing of Educators and the Preparation of Educational Professionals (5000) (CVR 022-000-010) in effect during the period of the Agency's review.

* * * Advisory Council on Literacy * * *

Sec. 9. 16 V.S.A. § 2903a is amended to read:

§ 2903a. ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

(a) Creation. There is created the Advisory Council on Literacy. The Council shall advise the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly on how to improve proficiency outcomes in literacy for students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and how to sustain those outcomes.

(b) Membership. The Council shall be composed of the following ~~16~~ 19 members:

(1) ~~eight~~ 10 members who shall serve as ex officio members:

(A) the Secretary of Education or designee;

(B) a member of the Standards Board for Professional Educators who is knowledgeable in licensing requirements for teaching literacy, appointed by the Standards Board;

(C) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association or designee;

(D) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association or designee;

(E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators or designee;

(F) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or designee;

(G) the Executive Director of the Vermont Independent Schools Association or designee; and

(H) the Executive Director of the Vermont-National Education Association or designee; and

(I) the State Librarian or designee; and

(J) the Executive Director of the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association or designee; and

(2) ~~eight~~ seven members who shall serve two-year terms:

(A) ~~a representative, appointed by the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association; [Repealed.]~~

(B) three teachers, appointed by the Vermont-National Education Association, who teach literacy, one of whom shall be a special education literacy teacher and two of whom shall teach literacy to students in prekindergarten through grade three;

(C) three community members who have struggled with literacy proficiency or supported others who have struggled with literacy proficiency, one of whom shall be a high school student, appointed by the Agency of Education in consultation with the Vermont Family Network; and

(D) one member appointed by the Agency of Education who has expertise in working with students with dyslexia; and

(3) two faculty members of approved educator preparation programs located in Vermont, one of whom shall be employed by a private college or university, appointed by the Agency of Education in consultation with the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges, and one of whom shall be employed by a public college or university, appointed by the Agency of Education in consultation with the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College and the Vermont State Colleges Corporation.

* * *

(d) Powers and duties. The Council shall advise the Agency Secretary of Education, ~~the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly~~ on how to improve proficiency outcomes in literacy for students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and how to sustain those outcomes and shall:

(1) advise the ~~Agency of Education~~ Secretary on how to:

(A) update section 2903 of this title;

(B) implement the statewide literacy plan required by section 2903 of this title and whether, based on its implementation, changes should be made to the plan; and

(C) maintain the statewide literacy plan;

(2) advise the ~~Agency of Education~~ Secretary on what services the Agency should provide to school districts to support implementation of the plan and on staffing levels and resources needed at the Agency to support the statewide effort to improve literacy;

(3) develop a plan for collecting literacy-related data that informs:

(A) literacy instructional practices;

(B) teacher professional development in the field of literacy;

(C) what proficiencies and other skills should be measured through literacy assessments and how those literacy assessments are incorporated into local assessment plans; and

(D) how to identify school progress in achieving literacy outcomes, including closing literacy gaps for students from historically underserved populations;

(4) recommend evidence-based best practices for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy instruction within the multitiered system of supports required under section 2902 of this title to best improve and sustain literacy proficiency; and

(5) review literacy assessments and outcomes and provide ongoing advice as to how to continuously improve those outcomes and sustain that improvement.

* * *

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Council to occur on or before August 1, 2021.

(2) The Council shall select a chair from among its members.

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

(4) The Council shall meet not more than ~~eight~~ four times per year.

(g) Assistance. The Council shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Council shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than ~~eight~~ four meetings of the Council per year.

Sec. 10. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28, Sec. 7 is amended to read:

Sec. 7. REPEAL; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

16 V.S.A. § 2903a (Advisory Council on Literacy) as added by this act is repealed on June 30, ~~2024~~ 2027.

* * * Agency of Education Literacy Position * * *

Sec. 11. POSITION; AGENCY OF EDUCATION; LITERACY

In fiscal year 2025, the conversion of one limited service position created in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28, Sec. 4, to one classified permanent status position within the Agency of Education is authorized. The position shall provide support to the Agency in its evidence-based literacy work.

* * * Expanding Early Childhood Literacy Resources * * *

Sec. 12. EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY RESOURCES;
REPORT

On or before January 15, 2025, the Department of Libraries shall submit a written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education with recommendations for expanding access to early childhood literacy resources with a focus on options that target low-income or underserved areas of the State. Options considered shall include State or local partnership with or financial support for book gifting programs, book distribution programs, and any other compelling avenue for supporting early childhood literacy in Vermont.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 13. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on passage, except that Sec. 7 (16 V.S.A. § 1710; literacy professional development) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Rep. Mihaly of Calais, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Education.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Education agreed to, and third reading ordered.

**Senate Proposal of Amendment Not Concurred in;
Committee of Conference Requested and Appointed; Rules Suspended,
Messaged to the Senate Forthwith**

H. 882

The Senate proposed to the House to amend House bill, entitled

An act relating to capital construction and State bonding budget adjustment

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Legislative Intent * * *

Sec. 1. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 1 is amended to read:

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that of the ~~\$122,767,376.00~~ \$130,606,224.00 authorized in this act, not more than \$56,520,325.00 shall be appropriated in the first year of the biennium, and the remainder shall be appropriated in the second year.

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that in the second year of the biennium, any amendments to the appropriations or authorities granted in this act shall take the form of the Capital Construction and State Bonding Adjustment Bill. It is the intent of the General Assembly that unless otherwise indicated, all appropriations in this act are subject to capital budget adjustment.

* * * Capital Appropriations * * *

Sec. 2. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 2 is amended to read:

Sec. 2. STATE BUILDINGS

* * *

(c) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2025:

(1) Statewide, major maintenance: ~~\$8,500,000.00~~ \$8,501,999.00

* * *

(3) Statewide, planning, reuse, and contingency:

~~\$425,000.00~~ \$455,000.00

(4) Middlesex, Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence, master plan, design, and decommissioning: \$400,000.00 \$50,000.00

(5) Montpelier, State House, replacement of historic finishes: \$50,000.00 [Repealed.]

* * *

(11) Statewide, R22 refrigerant phase out: \$1,000,000.00 \$750,000.00

(12) Statewide, Art in State Buildings Program: \$75,000.00

(13) St. Albans, Northwest State Correctional Facility, roof replacement: \$400,000.00

* * *

Appropriation – FY 2024 \$23,126,244.00

Appropriation – FY 2025 \$25,275,000.00 \$25,131,999.00

Total Appropriation – Section 2 \$48,401,244.00 \$48,258,243.00

Sec. 3. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

Sec. 3. HUMAN SERVICES

* * *

(b) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2025 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for the following projects described in this subsection:

(1) Northwest State Correctional Facility, booking expansion, planning, design, and construction: \$2,500,000.00 \$2,600,000.00

* * *

(3) Statewide, correctional facilities, HVAC systems, planning, design, and construction for upgrades and replacements:

\$700,000.00 \$5,150,000.00

(4) Statewide, correctional facilities, accessibility upgrades: \$822,000.00

* * *

Appropriation – FY 2024 \$1,800,000.00

Appropriation – FY 2025 \$16,200,000.00 \$21,572,000.00

~~(e) The sum of \$6,000,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2025 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the Department of Environmental Conservation for clean water implementation projects. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

(g) The sum of \$550,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2025 to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for water quality grants and contracts.

(h) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2025 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the following projects:

(1) the Clean Water State/EPA Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) match for the Water Pollution Control Fund: \$1,600,000.00

(2) municipal pollution control grants: \$3,300,000.00

(i) The sum of \$550,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2025 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for forestry access roads, recreation access roads, and water quality improvements.

(j) In FY 2024 and FY 2025, any agency that receives funding from this section shall consult with the State Treasurer to ensure that the projects are capital eligible.

Appropriation – FY 2024	\$9,885,000.00
Appropriation – FY 2025	\$6,000,000.00
Total Appropriation – Section 10	\$15,885,000.00

Sec. 7. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 15a is added to read:

Sec. 15a. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The sum of \$1,540,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2025 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Department of Labor for upgrades of mechanical systems and HVAC, life safety needs, and minor interior renovations at 5 Green Mountain Drive in Montpelier.

Sec. 8. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 15b is added to read:

Sec. 15b. SERGEANT AT ARMS

The sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2025 to the Sergeant at Arms for the replacement of tables and chairs in the State House cafeteria.

* * * Funding * * *

Sec. 8a. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 16 is amended to read:

Sec. 16. REALLOCATION OF FUNDS; TRANSFER OF FUNDS

(a) The following sums are reallocated to the Department of Buildings and General Services from prior capital appropriations to defray expenditures authorized in Sec. 2 of this act:

* * *

(5) of the amount appropriated in 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 26, Sec. 2(b) (various projects): \$65,463.17 \$147,206.37

* * *

(7) of the amount appropriated in 2016 Acts and Resolves No. 160, Sec. 1(c)(5) (major maintenance): \$93,549.00 \$116,671.15

* * *

(10) of the amount appropriated in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 2(c) (various projects): \$24,363.06 \$476,725.66

* * *

(13) of the amount appropriated in 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 42, Sec. 2(b)(3) (major maintenance): \$32,780.00 \$439,889.66

* * *

(17) of the amount appropriated in 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 40, Sec. 2(b)(4) (Statewide, major maintenance): \$9,606.45

(18) of the amount appropriated in 2013 Acts and Resolves No. 51, Sec. 2(b)(4) (Statewide, major maintenance): \$7,207.90

(19) of the amount appropriated in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 2(b)(5) (Montpelier, State House, Dome, Drum, and Ceres, design, permitting, construction, restoration, renovation, and lighting):

\$38,525.00

(20) of the amount appropriated in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 11(b)(4) (municipal pollution control grants, pollution control projects and planning advances for feasibility studies, new projects):

\$4,498.17

(21) of the amount appropriated in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 11(f)(2) (EcoSystem restoration and protection): \$4,298.22

(22) of the amount appropriated in 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 190, Sec. 8(m) (Downtown Transportation Fund pilot project): \$9,150.00

(23) of the amount appropriated in 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 42, Sec. 2(b)(9) (Newport, Northeast State Correctional Facility, direct digital HVAC control system replacement): \$26,951.52

(24) of the amount appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 2(b)(20), as added by 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 180, Sec. 2 (Windsor, former Southeast State Correctional Facility, necessary demolition, salvage, dismantling, and improvements to facilitate future use of the facility): \$378,180.00

* * *

(h) From prior year bond issuance cost estimates allocated to the entities to which funds were appropriated and for which bonding was required as the source of funds, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 954, \$1,148,251.79 is reallocated to defray expenditures authorized by this act.

Total Reallocations and Transfers – Section 16

~~\$14,767,376.32~~ \$17,358,383.85

Sec. 9. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 17 is amended to read:

Sec. 17. GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS AND APPROPRIATIONS

(a) The State Treasurer is authorized to issue general obligation bonds in the amount of \$108,000,000.00 for the purpose of funding the appropriations made in Secs. 2–15b of this act. The State Treasurer, with the approval of the Governor, shall determine the appropriate form and maturity of the bonds authorized by this section consistent with the underlying nature of the appropriation to be funded. ~~The State Treasurer shall allocate the estimated cost of bond issuance or issuances to the entities to which funds are appropriated pursuant to this section and for which bonding is required as the source of funds, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 954.~~

(b) The State Treasurer is authorized to issue additional general obligation bonds in the amount of \$5,247,838.90 that were previously appropriated but unissued under 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69 for the purposes of funding the appropriations in this act.

Total Revenues – Section 17 \$108,000,000.00 \$113,247,838.90

Sec. 10. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18 is amended to read:

Sec. 18. FY 2024 AND 2025; CAPITAL PROJECTS; FY 2024
 APPROPRIATIONS ACT; INTENT; AUTHORIZATIONS

* * *

(c) Authorizations. In FY 2024, spending authority for the following capital projects are authorized as follows:

* * *

~~(7) the Department of Buildings and General Services is authorized to spend \$600,000.00 for planning for the boiler replacement at the Northern State Correctional Facility in Newport; [Repealed.]~~

* * *

~~(9) the Department of Buildings and General Services is authorized to spend \$600,000.00 for the Agency of Human Services for the planning and design of the booking expansion at the Northwest State Correctional Facility; [Repealed.]~~

(10) the Department of Buildings and General Services is authorized to spend ~~\$1,000,000.00~~ \$750,000.00 for the Agency of Human Services for the planning and design of the Department for Children and Families' short-term stabilization facility;

(11) the Department of Buildings and General Services is authorized to spend \$750,000.00 for the Judiciary for design, renovations, and land acquisition at the Washington County Superior Courthouse in Barre;

* * *

(16) the Vermont State Colleges is authorized to spend ~~\$7,500,000.00~~ \$6,500,000.00 for construction, renovation, and major maintenance at any facility owned or operated in the State by the Vermont State Colleges; infrastructure transformation planning; and the planning, design, and construction of Green Hall and Vail Hall;

* * *

(19) the Agency of Natural Resources is authorized to spend \$4,000,000.00 for the Department of Environmental Conservation for the Municipal Pollution Control Grants for pollution control projects and planning advances for feasibility studies; and

(20) the Agency of Natural Resources is authorized to spend \$3,000,000.00 for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for the maintenance facilities at the Gifford Woods State Park and Groton Forest State Park; and

~~(21) the Agency of Natural Resources is authorized to spend \$800,000.00 for the Department of Fish and Wildlife for infrastructure maintenance and improvements of the Department's buildings, including conservation camps. [Repealed.]~~

~~(d) FY 2025 capital projects authorizations. To the extent general funds are available to appropriate to the Fund established in 32 V.S.A. § 1001b in FY 2025, it is the intent of the General Assembly that the following capital projects receive funding from the Fund. In FY 2024, spending authority for the following capital projects are authorized as follows:~~

(1) the sum of ~~\$250,000.00~~ \$220,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for planning, reuse, and contingency;

* * *

(3) the sum of ~~\$2,000,000.00~~ \$1,500,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the renovation of the interior HVAC steam lines at 120 State Street in Montpelier;

(4) the sum of ~~\$1,000,000.00~~ \$850,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Judiciary for design, renovations, and land acquisition at the Washington County Superior Courthouse in Barre;

(5) the sum of ~~\$1,000,000.00~~ \$850,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Department of Public Safety for the planning and design of the Special Teams Facility and Storage;

(6) the sum of ~~\$1,000,000.00~~ \$850,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Department of Public Safety for the planning and design of the Rutland Field Station;

* * *

~~(8) the sum of \$500,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Newport courthouse replacement, planning, and design; [Repealed.]~~

(9) the sum of \$250,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for planning for the 133-109 State Street tunnel waterproofing and Aiken Avenue reconstruction; and

(10) the sum of \$200,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the renovation of the stack area, HVAC upgrades, and the elevator replacement at 111 State Street;

(11) the sum of \$1,000,000.00 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for roof replacement and brick façade repairs at the McFarland State Office Building in Barre; and

(12) the sum of \$30,000.00 to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Lake Champlain International fishing derby.

* * *

* * * Policy * * *

* * * Agency of Natural Resources * * *

Sec. 11. 10 V.S.A. § 2603 is amended to read:

§ 2603. POWERS AND DUTIES: COMMISSIONER

* * *

~~(g) The Commissioner shall consult with and receive approval from the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services concerning proposed construction or renovation of individual projects involving capital improvements which are expected, either in phases or in total, to cost more than \$200,000.00. The Department of Environmental Conservation shall manage all contracts for engineering services for capital improvements made by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. The Department of Environmental Conservation Facilities Engineering Section:~~

(1) may execute and consult on design for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation;

(2) shall provide professional engineering services for compliance with environmental operating permits; and

(3) shall be the custodian of all plans of record for work executed by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, regardless of the source and designer of record.

* * *

Sec. 12. LEGISLATIVE INTENT; SALISBURY FISH HATCHERY

It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

(1) The State shall maintain or increase its current fish stocking capacity.

(2) To the extent practicable, the Salisbury fish hatchery shall, subject to annual appropriations, continue operating through December 31, 2027.

(3) The Agency of Natural Resources shall examine potential options for continuing the operation of the Salisbury fish hatchery after fiscal year 2027, including maintaining any necessary permits.

(4) The Agency of Natural Resources shall examine options for maintaining or increasing the State's current fish stocking capacity following the potential closure of the Salisbury fish hatchery, including:

(A) replacing the stocking capacity of the Salisbury fish hatchery with increased stocking capacity at one or more State-operated or federally operated fish hatcheries;

(B) transferring fish broodstock from the Salisbury hatchery to other State fish hatcheries;

(C) establishing additional egg production at other State fish hatcheries to compensate for any lost egg production; and

(D) utilizing other innovative or more cost-effective approaches for replacing any lost stocking capacity.

(5) The Agency of Natural Resources shall examine options for limiting any negative economic impact from the potential closure of the Salisbury fish hatchery, including impacts from reduced fish stocking on fishing and tourism, and impacts from the loss of staff positions at the Salisbury fish hatchery.

(6) The Salisbury fish hatchery shall not close without prior approval of the General Assembly, which shall be provided if:

(A) the hatchery is unable to secure the necessary permits to continue operating after December 31, 2027; or

(B) the stocking capacity of the hatchery can be replaced in a manner that is more cost-effective than the up-front and operating costs of the capital improvements necessary for the hatchery to obtain the necessary permits to continue operating after December 31, 2027.

Sec. 13. SALISBURY FISH HATCHERY; ANNUAL REPORT

On or before January 15 of 2025, 2026, and 2027, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall submit a written report to the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Environment and Energy regarding efforts undertaken and progress made with respect to sustaining the fish production and stocking capacity of Vermont's State-operated fish hatcheries, including:

(1) efforts to maintain permits necessary to continue operating the Salisbury fish hatchery after December 31, 2027;

(2) the potential for transferring the stocking capacity of the Salisbury fish hatchery to one or more State-operated or federally operated fish hatcheries, including estimated costs;

(3) the potential for transferring the fish broodstock of the Salisbury fish hatchery to one or more State-operated fish hatcheries for the purpose of

replacing the Salisbury fish hatchery's egg production, including estimated costs;

(4) the potential to employ innovative or more cost-effective approaches than those identified pursuant to subdivisions (1)–(3) of this section to replace any lost stocking capacity due to the closure of the Salisbury fish hatchery, including estimated costs; and

(5) options for limiting negative economic impact of the potential closure of the Salisbury fish hatchery after December 31, 2027, including impacts from reduced fish stocking on fishing and tourism, and impacts from the loss of staff positions at the Salisbury fish hatchery.

Sec. 14. [Deleted.]

* * * Buildings and General Services * * *

Sec. 15. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 22 is amended to read:

Sec. 22. SALE OF PROPERTIES

* * *

(c) 108 Cherry Street. Notwithstanding 29 V.S.A. § 166(b), the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to sell the property located at 108 Cherry Street in the City of Burlington. The Commissioner shall first offer in writing to the City the right to purchase the property.

* * *

(3) Notwithstanding 29 V.S.A. § 166(d) and 29 V.S.A. § 160, of the proceeds received by the State for the sale of the property located at 108 Cherry Street in the City of Burlington, \$6,242,500.00 shall be deposited into the Property Management Revolving Fund (58700) to recover the deficit incurred in the fund as a result of the original purchase of the property and, notwithstanding 29 V.S.A. § 168(c), \$293,753.63 shall be deposited into the State Energy Revolving Fund (59700) to repay debt outstanding for loans for energy improvement projects on the property.

Sec. 16. SALE OF FORMER WILLISTON STATE POLICE BARRACKS;
INTENT; REPORT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Town of Williston shall report to the Senate Committee on Institutions and the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions in January 2025 regarding:

(1) whether the town desires to purchase the property; and

(2) if so:

(A) the feasibility of the Town purchasing the property, including any requested conditions on the sale of the property; and

(B) the potential future uses of the property envisioned by the Town.

Sec. 17. 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 36 is amended to read:

Sec. 36. PUBLIC SAFETY FIELD STATION; WILLISTON

* * *

(b) The Beginning on July 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to sell the Williston Public Safety Field Station and adjacent land pursuant to the requirements of 29 V.S.A. § 166. The proceeds from the sale shall be appropriated to future capital construction projects.

Sec. 18. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 34 is amended to read:

Sec. 34. WILLISTON PUBLIC SAFETY BARRACKS; SALE

The Beginning on July 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to sell the property known as the Williston Public Safety Barracks (State Office Building) located at 2777 St. George Road in Williston, Vermont pursuant to the requirements of 29 V.S.A. § 166. The proceeds from the sale shall be appropriated to future capital construction projects.

Sec. 19. 29 V.S.A. § 152 is amended to read:

§ 152. DUTIES OF COMMISSIONER

(a) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in addition to the duties expressly set forth elsewhere by law, shall have the authority to:

* * *

(3) Prepare or cause to be prepared plans and specifications for construction and repair on all State-owned buildings:

* * *

(B) For which no specific appropriations have been made by the General Assembly or the Emergency Board. The Commissioner may, with the approval of the Secretary of Administration, acquire an option, ~~for a price not to exceed \$75,000.00,~~ on an individual property without prior legislative approval, for a price not to exceed five percent of the listed sale price of the property, provided the option contains a provision stating that purchase of the property shall occur only upon the approval of the General Assembly and the

appropriation of funds for this purpose. The State Treasurer is authorized to advance a sum not to exceed ~~\$75,000.00~~ five percent of the listed sale price of the property, upon warrants drawn by the Commissioner of Finance and Management for the purpose of purchasing an option on a property pursuant to this subdivision.

* * *

(19) Transfer any unexpended project balances between projects that are authorized within the same section of ~~an annual~~ a biennial capital construction act.

(20) Transfer any unexpended project balances between projects that are authorized within different capital construction acts, with the approval of the Secretary of Administration, when the unexpended project balance does not exceed ~~\$100,000.00~~ \$200,000.00, or with the additional approval of the Emergency Board when such balance exceeds ~~\$100,000.00~~ \$200,000.00.

* * *

(22) Use the contingency fund appropriation to cover shortfalls for any project approved in any capital construction act; however, transfers from the contingency in excess of ~~\$50,000.00~~ \$100,000.00 shall be done with the approval of the Secretary of Administration.

* * *

Sec. 20. 29 V.S.A. § 166 is amended to read:

§ 166. SELLING OR RENTING STATE PROPERTY

* * *

(b)(1) Upon authorization by the General Assembly, which may be granted by resolution, and with the advice and consent of the Governor, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services may sell real estate owned by the State. ~~Such~~ The property shall be sold to the highest bidder ~~therefor~~ at public auction or upon sealed bids ~~in~~ at the discretion of the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, who may reject any or all bids, or the Commissioner is authorized to list the sale of property with a real estate agent licensed by the State. In no event shall the property be sold for less than fair market value as determined by the Commissioner in consultation with an independent real estate broker or appraiser, or both, retained by the Commissioner, unless otherwise authorized by the General Assembly.

* * *

Sec. 21. SOUTHEAST STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; POTENTIAL LAND TRANSFER; REPORT

(a) The Department of Fish and Wildlife, in consultation with the Department of Buildings and General Services, shall evaluate the potential transfer of a portion of the former Southeast State Correctional Facility property to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for inclusion in the adjacent wildlife management area. The evaluation shall:

(1) delineate the portions of the former Southeast State Correctional Facility property that could be used for future redevelopment of the site, taking into account any necessary setbacks from wetlands, streams, or wildlife habitat;

(2) identify any portions of the property that could be transferred into the adjacent wildlife management area and potential impacts on the redevelopment or sale of the property from the transfer of the identified portions; and

(3) identify any rights of way or easements that will be necessary for the potential future redevelopment of any retained portion of the property.

(b) On or before January 15, 2025, the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions regarding the evaluation and any legislative action that may be necessary to facilitate a proposed transfer or redevelopment of the property.

Sec. 21a. SOUTHERN STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; TRANSFER OF PARCEL

(a) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to transfer to the Town of Springfield a portion of the Southern State Correctional Facility Property consisting of approximately 10 acres to be used as the location of a new Town garage.

(b) The transfer shall be contingent on:

(1) the State obtaining State and local zoning and subdivision approvals that are necessary for the transfer; and

(2) the negotiation of an agreement between the State and the Town of Springfield regarding the maintenance and upkeep of the access road and the water and sewer service lines for the Correctional Facility and the transferred parcel.

(c) The transferred parcel shall not include any brownfields on the Southern State Correctional Facility Property.

(d) In the event the Town does not utilize the transferred parcel for a new Town garage, the Town shall consult with the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services regarding any proposed alternative uses of the parcel.

(e) The transfer authority provided pursuant to this section shall expire on July 1, 2027.

Sec. 22. FORENSIC FACILITY; NEEDS; REVIEW; REPORT

(a) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in consultation with the Commissioners of Mental Health and of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, shall review the programming needs and facility requirements of individuals who will be housed in a proposed forensic facility. The review shall be performed during fiscal year 2025 using funds from the Department of Buildings and General Service's base appropriation as the Commissioner determines to be appropriate. The Commissioner shall report, on or before February 1, 2025, to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Institutions and to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Corrections and Institutions regarding the findings of the review.

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the fiscal year 2026 capital construction and State bonding act shall include funding for the design and development of the proposed forensic facility.

Sec. 22a. SOUTHEAST STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY;
POTENTIAL REUSE BY STATE; INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that the parcel on which the former Southeast State Correctional Facility was located shall not be sold unless the State has determined that the site is not needed for use as the location for a State facility or other State purpose.

Sec. 23. DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES YOUTH
SHORT-TERM STABILIZATION AND TREATMENT CENTER;
LONG-TERM LEASE; AUTHORIZATION

Notwithstanding any provisions of 29 V.S.A. § 165(h) or 29 V.S.A. § 166(a) to the contrary, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to enter into a long-term ground lease agreement at a below-market rate for an initial term of not more than 20 years with not more than four five-year renewal options for the Department for Children and Families Youth Short Term Stabilization and Treatment Center. At the end of the term and any renewals, the ground lease shall terminate.

Sec. 24. CAPITOL COMPLEX FLOOD RECOVERY; SPECIAL COMMITTEE

(a) The Special Committee on Capitol Complex Flood Recovery is established. The Special Committee shall comprise the Joint Fiscal Committee and the chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions.

(b)(1) The Special Committee shall meet at the call of the chair of the Joint Fiscal Committee, in consultation with the chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions.

(2)(A) The Special Committee shall meet to review and recommend alterations to proposals and plans for Capitol Complex flood recovery.

(B) The Special Committee may, as necessary, grant approval to proposals and plans for Capitol Complex flood recovery.

(c) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall provide quarterly updates to the Special Committee on the planning process for Capitol Complex flood recovery.

(d) The Special Committee shall be entitled to per diem and expenses as provided in 2 V.S.A. § 23.

Sec. 25. STATE HOUSE; IMPROVEMENTS; DESIGN; SPECIAL COMMITTEE

(a)(1) To allow the Department of Buildings and General Services to begin the design development phase, it is the intent of the General Assembly to approve a schematic design plan for accessibility, life safety, and mechanical systems improvements to the State House identified in Scenario 1, as approved by the Joint Legislative Management Committee on December 15, 2023 and excluding any improvements that would impact committee rooms.

(2) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall provide the Special Committee established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section with a draft schematic design plan for the work identified pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection on or before July 15, 2024 and a final schematic design plan on or before September 15, 2024.

(b)(1) A Special Committee to be called the Special Committee on State House Improvements consisting of the Joint Legislative Management Committee and the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions is established.

(2) The Special Committee is authorized to meet to:

(A) review and recommend alterations to the draft schematic design to be submitted on or before July 15, 2024 as described in subsection (a) of this section at a regularly scheduled Joint Legislative Management Committee meeting; and

(B) review and approve the final schematic design to be submitted on or before September 15, 2024 as described in subsection (a) of this section at a regularly scheduled Joint Legislative Management Committee meeting.

(c) In making its decision, the Special Committee shall consider:

(1) how the design impacts the ability of the General Assembly to conduct legislative business;

(2) whether the design allows for public access to citizens;

(3) the financial consequences to the State of approval or disapproval of the proposal; and

(4) whether any potential alternatives are available.

(d) The Special Committee shall be entitled to per diem and expenses as provided in 2 V.S.A. § 23.

* * * Corrections * * *

Sec. 26. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 28 is amended to read:

Sec. 28. REPLACEMENT WOMEN'S FACILITIES; SITE LOCATION PROPOSAL; DESIGN INTENT

(a) Site location proposal.

~~(1)(A) Site location proposal.~~ On or before January 15, ~~2024~~ 2025, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall submit a site location proposal for replacement women's facilities for justice-involved women to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions.

(B) It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

(i) when evaluating site locations, preference shall be given to State-owned property; and

(ii) the site location, regardless of whether it is on State-owned land or land proposed to be purchased by the State, shall be:

(I) near support services, programming, and work opportunities needed to facilitate successful reentry into the community; and

(II) in a reasonable proximity to the existing workforce to facilitate retention and continuity of experienced staff.

(C)(i) The proposal shall consider both colocating facilities in a campus-style approach for operational efficiencies and the need for separate facilities at different locations.

(ii) The proposal shall consider the proximity of existing and potential future public transit services.

* * *

Sec. 27. REPLACEMENT WOMEN'S FACILITIES; AUTHORITY TO PURCHASE LAND; INTENT; REPORT

(a) Contingent authority to purchase land. In the event that the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Corrections, is unable to identify appropriate State-owned site locations for the replacement facilities for justice-involved women, the Commissioner is authorized to purchase land in a location that is:

(1) near support services, programming, and work opportunities needed to facilitate successful reentry into the community;

(2) in a reasonable proximity to the existing workforce to facilitate retention and continuity of experienced staff; and

(3) near existing or potential future public transit services.

(b) Reports. Beginning in July 2024 and ending in January 2025, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Corrections, shall report at least once per calendar quarter to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions regarding progress in fulfilling the requirements of 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 28 and subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 28. POTENTIAL REUSE OF CHITTENDEN REGIONAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY SITE; FEASIBILITY; REPORT

(a) On or before December 15, 2025, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Corrections, shall report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Judiciary regarding the feasibility of utilizing the site of the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility for a reentry facility for eligible justice-involved men following the construction of replacement facilities for justice-involved women.

(b) The report shall:

(1)(A) evaluate the condition and structure of the existing facility to determine if it can be repurposed as a reentry facility in a manner that supports the programmatic goals of the Department of Corrections using evidence-based principles for wellness environments for supporting trauma-informed practices; and

(B) if it can be repurposed as a reentry facility, the improvements and other work necessary to support the programmatic goals of the Department of Corrections using evidence-based principles for wellness environments for supporting trauma-informed practices and the estimated cost of performing the work;

(2)(A) evaluate whether a new reentry facility could be constructed on the site following the demolition of some or all of the existing facility;

(B) identify potential designs for a newly constructed reentry facility at the site that supports the programmatic goals of the Department of Corrections using evidence-based principles for wellness environments for supporting trauma-informed practices; and

(C) identify any site work, improvements, and other work necessary to construct a new reentry facility on the site, including the cost of any such work; and

(3) if the existing facility cannot be repurposed as a reentry facility and a new reentry facility cannot be constructed on the site, identify other potential sites for a male reentry facility that are near:

(A) support services, programming, and work opportunities needed to facilitate successful reentry into the community; and

(B) existing or potential future public transit services.

(c) As used in this section, “reentry facility” means a facility at which incarcerated individuals prepare to transition back into the community following release. Reentry facilities provide services, or enable incarcerated individuals to obtain services, that will facilitate the transition back into the community, including career and housing supports, vocational education, job placement, mental health counseling, substance use disorder treatment or recovery services, financial education, assistance with obtaining public benefits, and other similar services.

(d) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the fiscal year 2026 capital construction and State bonding act shall include funding for the preparation of the report required pursuant to this section.

* * * Judiciary * * *

Sec. 29. BARRE; WASHINGTON COUNTY SUPERIOR COURTHOUSE;
LAND ACQUISITION; AUTHORIZATION; COMMUNICATION
WITH CITY

(a) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in consultation with the Judiciary, is authorized to use the amounts appropriated in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(11) and (d)(4) to purchase land as needed to renovate or replace the Washington County Superior Courthouse.

(b) The Commissioner shall:

(1) consult with the City of Barre on potential options for renovating or replacing the Washington County Superior Courthouse in Barre; and

(2) provide updates to the City on progress made with respect to renovating or replacing the Courthouse.

Sec. 30. WHITE RIVER JUNCTION; WINDSOR COUNTY SUPERIOR
COURTHOUSE; TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF EMPLOYEES

It is the intent of the General Assembly that following completion of the renovations to the Windsor County Superior Courthouse in White River Junction, the offices of the Windsor County State's Attorney shall be relocated to the leased office space at 55 Railroad Row that is being used as temporary office space for Courthouse employees during the renovation.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 31. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Pending the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal of amendment?, **Rep. Emmons of Springfield** moved that the House refuse to concur and ask for a Committee of Conference, which was agreed to, and the Speaker appointed as members of the Committee of Conference on the part of the House:

Rep. Emmons of Springfield

Rep. Casey of Montpelier

Rep. Headrick of Burlington

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and the House's actions on the bill were ordered messaged to the Senate forthwith.

**Senate Proposal of Amendment to House Proposal of Amendment
Concurred in**

S. 209

The Senate concurred in the House proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto on Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to prohibiting unserialized firearms and unserialized firearms frames and receivers

The Senate concurred in the House proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. chapter 85 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 85. WEAPONS

* * *

Subchapter 4. Unserialized Firearms and Firearms Frames and Receivers

§ 4081. SHORT TITLE

This subchapter shall be known as the “Vermont Ghost Guns Act.”

§ 4082. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Federal firearms licensee” means a federally licensed firearm dealer, federally licensed firearm importer, and federally licensed firearm manufacturer.

(2) “Federally licensed firearm dealer” means a licensed dealer as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(11).

(3) “Federally licensed firearm importer” means a licensed importer as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(9).

(4) “Federally licensed firearm manufacturer” means a licensed manufacturer as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(10).

(5) “Fire control component” means a component necessary for the firearm to initiate, complete, or continue the firing sequence, including any of the following: hammer, bolt, bolt carrier, breechblock, cylinder, trigger mechanism, firing pin, striker, or slide rails.

(6) “Frame or receiver of a firearm” means a part of a firearm that, when the complete firearm is assembled, is visible from the exterior and provides housing or a structure designed to hold or integrate one or more fire

control components, even if pins or other attachments are required to connect the fire control components. Any part of a firearm imprinted with a serial number is presumed to be a frame or receiver of a firearm unless the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives makes an official determination otherwise or there is other reliable evidence to the contrary.

(7) “Three-dimensional printer” means a computer-aided manufacturing device capable of producing a three-dimensional object from a three-dimensional digital model through an additive manufacturing process that involves the layering of two-dimensional cross sections formed of a resin or similar material that are fused together to form a three-dimensional object.

(8) “Unfinished frame or receiver” means any forging, casting, printing, extrusion, machined body, or similar article that has reached a stage in manufacture when it may readily be completed, assembled, or converted to be used as the frame or receiver of a functional firearm or that is marketed or sold to the public to become or be used as the frame or receiver of a functional firearm once completed, assembled, or converted.

(9) “Violent crime” has the same meaning as in section 4017 of this title.

§ 4083. UNLAWFUL CONDUCT INVOLVING UNSERIALIZED FIREARMS, FRAMES, AND RECEIVERS

(a)(1) A person shall not knowingly possess an unfinished frame or receiver unless the unfinished frame or receiver has been imprinted with a serial number by a federal firearms licensee pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title.

(2) A person shall not knowingly transfer or offer to transfer an unfinished frame or receiver unless the unfinished frame or receiver has been imprinted with a serial number by a federal firearms licensee pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title.

(3) This subsection shall not apply to:

(A) a federal firearms licensee acting within the scope of the licensee’s license;

(B) possession or transfer of an unfinished frame or receiver for the purpose of having it imprinted with a serial number pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title; or

(C) an unfinished frame or receiver transferred to or possessed by a law enforcement officer for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

(b)(1) A person shall not knowingly possess a firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm that is not imprinted with a serial number by a federal firearms licensee pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title.

(2) A person shall not knowingly transfer or offer to transfer a firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm that is not imprinted with a serial number by a federal firearms licensee pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title.

(3) This subsection shall not apply to:

(A) a federal firearms licensee acting within the scope of the licensee's license;

(B) possession or transfer of a firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm for the purpose of having it imprinted with a serial number pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title;

(C) an unserialized frame or receiver transferred to or possessed by a law enforcement officer for legitimate law enforcement purposes;

(D) an antique firearm as defined in subsection 4017(d) of this title;

(E) a firearm that has been rendered permanently inoperable; or

(F) a firearm that was manufactured before 1968.

(c)(1) A person who manufactures a firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm, including by a three-dimensional printer, shall cause the firearm, frame, or receiver to be imprinted with a serial number by a federal firearms licensee pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title.

(2) This subsection shall not apply to:

(A) a federally licensed firearms manufacturer acting within the scope of the manufacturer's license; or

(B) possession or transfer of a firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm for the purpose of having it imprinted with a serial number pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title.

(d)(1) A person who violates subdivision (a)(1) or (b)(1) of this section shall be:

(A) for a first offense, assessed a civil penalty of not more than \$50.00;

(B) for a second offense, imprisoned for not more than two years or fined not more than \$1,000.00, or both; and

(C) for a third or subsequent offense, imprisoned for not more than three years or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

(2) A person who violates subdivision (a)(2), (b)(2), or (c)(1) of this section shall be:

(A) for a first offense, imprisoned for not more than one year or fined not more than \$500.00, or both;

(B) for a second offense, imprisoned for not more than two years or fined not more than \$1,000.00, or both; and

(C) for a third or subsequent offense, imprisoned for not more than three years or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

(3) A person who uses an unserialized firearm while committing a violent crime or while committing reckless endangerment in violation of section 1025 of this title shall be imprisoned for not more than five years or fined not more than \$5,000.00, or both.

§ 4084. FEDERAL FIREARMS LICENSEES; AUTHORITY TO
SERIALIZE FIREARMS, FRAMES, AND RECEIVERS

(a) A federal firearms licensee may imprint a serial number on an unserialized firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm pursuant to this section.

(b)(1) A firearm, frame, or receiver serialized pursuant to this section shall be imprinted with a serial number that begins with the licensee's abbreviated federal firearms license number, which is the first three and last five digits of the license number, and is followed by a hyphen that precedes a unique identification number. The serial number shall not be duplicated on any other firearm, frame, or receiver serialized by the licensee and shall be imprinted in a manner that complies with the requirements under federal law for affixing serial numbers to firearms, including that the serial number be at the minimum size and depth and not susceptible to being readily obliterated, altered, or removed.

(2) A licensee who serializes a firearm, frame, or receiver pursuant to this section shall make and retain records of the serialization that comply with the requirements under federal law for the sale of a firearm. In addition to any record required by federal law, the record shall include the date, name, age, and residence of any person to whom the item is transferred and the unique serial number imprinted on the firearm, frame, or receiver.

(3) A licensee shall not be deemed a firearms manufacturer solely for serializing a firearm, frame, or receiver pursuant to this section.

(c) Returning a firearm, frame, or receiver to a person after it has been serialized pursuant to federal law or this section constitutes a transfer that requires a background check of the transferee. A federal licensee who serializes a firearm, frame, or receiver pursuant to this section shall conduct a

background check on the transferee pursuant to subsection 4019(c) of this title, provided that if the transfer is denied, the licensee shall deliver the firearm, frame, or receiver to a law enforcement agency for disposition. The agency shall provide the licensee with a receipt on agency letterhead for the firearm, frame, or receiver.

(d) A licensee who violates subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall:

(1) for a first offense, be fined not more than \$2,500.00; and

(2) for a second or subsequent offense, be imprisoned for not more than one year or fined not more than \$2,500.00, or both.

Sec. 2. 4 V.S.A. § 1102 is amended to read:

§ 1102. JUDICIAL BUREAU; JURISDICTION

* * *

(33) Violations of 13 V.S.A. § 4083(a)(1) or (b)(1) relating to a first offense of possessing a firearm, frame or receiver of a firearm, or unfinished frame or receiver of a firearm that is not imprinted with a serial number.

* * *

Sec. 3. 13 V.S.A. § 4019a is amended to read:

§ 4019a. FIREARMS TRANSFERS; WAITING PERIOD

(a) A person shall not transfer a firearm to another person until 72 hours after the licensed dealer facilitating the transfer is provided with a unique identification number for the transfer by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) or seven business days have elapsed since the dealer contacted NICS to initiate the background check, whichever occurs first.

(b) A person who transfers a firearm to another person in violation of subsection (a) of this section shall be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$500.00, or both.

(c) This section shall not apply to a firearm transfer that does not require a background check under 18 U.S.C. § 922(t) or section 4019 of this title.

(d) As used in this section, "firearm" has the same meaning as in subsection 4017(d) of this title.

(e)(1) This section shall not apply to a firearms transfer at a gun show.

(2) As used in this subsection, “gun show” means a function sponsored by:

(A) a national, state, or local organization, devoted to the collection, competitive use, or other sporting use of firearms; or

(B) an organization or association that sponsors functions devoted to the collection, competitive use, or other sporting use of firearms in the community.

(3) This subsection shall be repealed on July 1, 2024.

(f) This section shall not apply to the return of a firearm, frame, or receiver to a person by a licensed dealer after the dealer has serialized it pursuant to federal law or section 4084 of this title if the dealer returns the firearm, frame, or receiver to the same person from whom it was received.

Sec. 4. 13 V.S.A. § 4027 is added to read:

§ 4027. POLLING PLACES; FIREARMS PROHIBITED

(a)(1) A person shall not knowingly possess a firearm at a polling place or on the walks leading to a building in which a polling place is located on an election day.

(2) The provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall apply to the town clerk’s office during any period when a board of civil authority has voted to permit early voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2546b(a)(1).

(b) A person who violates this section shall be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$1,000.00, or both.

(c) This section shall not apply to:

(1) a firearm carried for legitimate law enforcement purposes by a federal law enforcement officer or a law enforcement officer certified as a law enforcement officer by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2358;

(2) a firearm carried by a person while performing the person’s official duties as an employee of the United States; a department or agency of the United States; a state; or a department, agency, or political subdivision of a state if the person is authorized to carry a firearm as part of the person’s official duties; or

(3) a firearm stored in a motor vehicle.

(d) Notice of the provisions of this section shall be posted conspicuously at each public entrance to each polling place.

(e) As used in this section:

(1) “Firearm” has the same meaning as in section 4017 of this title.

(2) “Polling place” means a place that a municipality has designated to the Secretary of State as a polling place pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2502(f).

Sec. 5. 17 V.S.A. § 2510 is added to read:

§ 2510. POLLING PLACES; FIREARMS PROHIBITED

(a)(1) A person shall not knowingly possess a firearm at a polling place or on the walks leading to a building in which a polling place is located on an election day.

(2) The provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall apply to the town clerk’s office during any period when a board of civil authority has voted to permit early voting pursuant to subdivision 2546b(a)(1) of this title.

(b) This section shall not apply to:

(1) a firearm carried for legitimate law enforcement purposes by a federal law enforcement officer or a law enforcement officer certified as a law enforcement officer by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2358;

(2) a firearm carried by a person while performing the person’s official duties as an employee of the United States; a department or agency of the United States; a state; or a department, agency, or political subdivision of a state if the person is authorized to carry a firearm as part of the person’s official duties; or

(3) a firearm stored in a motor vehicle.

(c) Notice of the provisions of this section shall be posted conspicuously at each public entrance to each polling place.

(d) As used in this section:

(1) “Firearm” has the same meaning as in section 13 V.S.A. § 4017.

(2) “Polling place” means a place that a municipality has designated to the Secretary of State as a polling place pursuant to subsection 2502(f) of this title.

Sec. 6. REPORT; VERMONT CRIME RESEARCH GROUP

On or before January 1, 2026, the Vermont Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) shall report data on prosecutions under Sec. 1 of this act to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary. The report shall include:

(1) the number of civil violations filed and adjudications obtained for violations of 13 V.S.A. § 4083(a)(1) or (b)(1) relating to possessing a firearm, frame or receiver of a firearm, or unfinished frame or receiver of a firearm that is not imprinted with a serial number;

(2) the number of criminal charges filed and convictions obtained for violations of 13 V.S.A. § 4083(a)(2), (b)(2), or (c)(1) relating to transferring, offering to transfer, or manufacturing a firearm, frame or receiver of a firearm, or unfinished frame or receiver of a firearm that is not imprinted with a serial number;

(3) the number of criminal charges filed and convictions obtained for violations of 13 V.S.A. § 4083(d)(3) relating to carrying an unserialized firearm while committing a violent crime or while committing reckless endangerment; and

(4) the number of criminal charges filed and convictions obtained for violations of 13 V.S.A. § 4084(b) or (c) relating to improper serialization or handling of a firearm or frame or receiver of a firearm by a federal firearms licensee.

Sec. 7. REPORT ON FIREARM IN MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS; VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

(a) On or before January 15, 2025, the Office of the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Association, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, and the Sergeant at Arms, shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary, the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Government Operations on options for prohibiting firearms in municipal and State government buildings, including the Vermont State House.

(b) The report required by this section shall include recommendations on the following topics:

(1) whether the preferable approach is:

(A) for the General Assembly to pass a statute prohibiting firearms in municipal buildings statewide; or

(B) for municipalities to be provided with the authority to decide whether to pass an ordinance prohibiting firearms in municipal buildings;

(2) whether a statewide prohibition should include a definition of the term “municipal building,” and if so, what that definition should be; and

(3) which municipal buildings should be covered and which should not be covered by a prohibition on possessing firearms in municipal buildings.

(c) As used in this section, “firearm” has the same meaning as in 13 V.S.A. § 4017(d).

Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Secs. 1 and 2 of this act shall take effect on February 28, 2025.

(b) Secs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and this section shall take effect on passage.

Which proposal of amendment was considered and concurred in.

Senate Proposal of Amendment Concurred in

H. 173

The Senate proposed to the House to amend House bill, entitled

An act relating to prohibiting manipulating a child for the purpose of sexual contact

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill as follows:

First: By inserting a new Sec. 1 to read as follows:

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE FINDING

According to the Crimes Against Children Research Center, child sexual abuse is tragically widespread with one in five girls and one in 20 boys experiencing sexual abuse before 18 years of age. In over 90 percent of incidents of child sexual abuse, the perpetrator is someone known and trusted by the child and the child’s family.

and by renumbering the remaining sections to be numerically correct.

Second: In the newly renumbered Sec. 2, purpose, by striking out subsections (a) and (c) in their entireties and by relettering the remaining subsections to be alphabetically correct and in the newly relettered subsection (a), after “community”, by inserting with intent.

Which proposal of amendment was considered and concurred in.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 220

Rep. Mrowicki of Putney, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to Vermont’s public libraries

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Library Policies; Selection and Retention of Library Materials * * *

Sec. 1. 22 V.S.A. § 67 is amended to read:

§ 67. PUBLIC LIBRARIES; STATEMENT OF POLICY; USE OF
FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

* * *

(c) To ensure that Vermont libraries protect and promote the principles of free speech, inquiry, discovery, and public accommodation, it is necessary that the trustees, managers, or directors of free public libraries adopt policies that comply with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and State and federal civil rights and antidiscrimination laws.

Sec. 2. 22 V.S.A. § 69 is added to read:

§ 69. PUBLIC LIBRARIES; SELECTION AND RECONSIDERATION OF
LIBRARY MATERIALS

A public library shall adopt a library material selection policy and procedures for the reconsideration and retention of library materials that complies with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, State laws prohibiting discrimination in places of public accommodation, and that reflect Vermont's diverse people and history, including diversity of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and political beliefs. A public library may adopt as its policy a model policy adopted by the Department of Libraries pursuant to section 606 of this title.

* * * Confidentiality of Library Records; Minors * * *

Sec. 3. 22 V.S.A. § 172 is amended to read:

§ 172. LIBRARY RECORD CONFIDENTIALITY; EXEMPTIONS

* * *

(b) Unless authorized by other provisions of law, the library's officers, employees, and volunteers shall not disclose the records except:

* * *

(4) to custodial parents or guardians of patrons under ~~age 16~~ 12 years of age; or

* * *

* * * Public Safety * * *

Sec. 4. 13 V.S.A. § 1702 is amended to read:

§ 1702. CRIMINAL THREATENING

* * *

(d) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section by making a threat that places any person in reasonable apprehension that death, serious bodily injury, or sexual assault will occur at a public or ~~private~~ independent school; postsecondary education institution; public library; place of worship; polling place during election activities; the Vermont State House; or any federal, State, or municipal building shall be imprisoned not more than two years or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

* * *

(h) As used in this section:

* * *

(12) “Public library” means a public library as defined in 22 V.S.A. § 101.

* * *

* * * Library Governance * * *

Sec. 5. 22 V.S.A. § 105 is amended to read:

§ 105. GENERAL POWERS

(a) The trustees, managers, or directors shall:

(1) elect the officers of the corporation from their number and have the control and management of the affairs, ~~finances,~~ and property of the corporation;

(2) adopt bylaws and policies governing the operation of the library;

(3) establish a library budget;

(4) hold regular meetings; and

(5) ensure compliance with the terms of any funding, grants, or bequests.

(b) The Trustees, managers, or directors may:

(1) accept donations and, in their discretion, hold the donations in the form in which they are given for the purposes of science, literature, and art germane to the objects and purposes of the corporation. They may; and

(2) in their discretion, receive by loan books, manuscripts, works of art, and other library materials and hold or circulate them under the conditions specified by the owners.

Sec. 6. 22 V.S.A. § 143 is amended to read:

§ 143. TRUSTEES

(a) Unless a municipality which that has established or shall establish a public library votes at its annual meeting to elect a board of trustees, the governing body of the municipality shall appoint the trustees. The appointment or election of the trustees shall continue in effect until changed at an annual meeting of the municipality. When trustees are first chosen, they shall be elected or appointed for staggered terms.

(b) The board shall consist of not less fewer than five trustees who shall have full power to:

(1) manage the public library, make and any property that shall come into the hands of the municipality by gift, purchase, devise, or bequest for the use and benefit of the library;

(2) adopt bylaws, and policies governing the operation of the library;

(3) elect officers, establish a library policy and receive, control and manage property which shall come into the hands of the municipality by gift, purchase, devise or bequest for the use and benefit of the library;

(4) establish a library budget for consideration by the legislative body of the municipality for inclusion in the municipality's budget;

(5) hold regular meetings; and

(6) ensure compliance with the terms of any funding, grants, or bequests.

(c) The board may appoint a director for the efficient administration and conduct of the library. A library director shall be under the supervision and control of the library board of trustees, unless the employee relationship is otherwise specified in the municipality's charter or by written agreement between the legislative body of the municipality and the trustees.

~~(b) When trustees are first chosen, they shall be elected or appointed for staggered terms.~~

* * * Department of Libraries * * *

Sec. 7. 22 V.S.A. § 606 is amended to read:

§ 606. OTHER DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Department, in addition to the functions specified in section 605 of this title:

* * *

(5) May Shall provide a continuing education program for a Certificate in Public Librarianship. The Department shall conduct seminars, workshops, and other programs to increase the professional competence of librarians in the State.

* * *

(8) Shall be the primary access point for State information, and provide advice on State information technology policy.

(9) May develop and adopt model policies for free public libraries concerning displays, meeting room use, patron behavior, internet use, library materials selection, and other relevant topics, as well as procedures for the reconsideration and retention of library materials, to ensure compliance with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Vermont laws prohibiting discrimination in places of public accommodation.

(10) Shall adopt a material selection policy and procedures for reconsideration and retention that reflect Vermont's diverse people and history, including diversity of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and political beliefs.

(11) May develop best practices and guidelines for public libraries and library service levels.

* * * School Library Material Selection * * *

Sec. 7a. 16 V.S.A. § 1624 is added to read:

§ 1624. SCHOOL LIBRARY MATERIAL SELECTION POLICY

(a) Each school board and each approved independent school shall develop, adopt, ensure the enforcement of, and make available in the manner described under subdivision 563(1) of this title a library material selection policy and procedures for the reconsideration and retention of materials. The policy and procedures shall affirm the importance of intellectual freedom and be guided by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Vermont laws prohibiting discrimination in places of public

accommodation, the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement, Vermont's Freedom to Read Statement, and reflect Vermont's diverse people and history, including diversity of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and political beliefs.

(b) In order to ensure a student's First Amendment rights are protected and all students' identities are affirmed and dignity respected, the policy and procedures required under subsection (a) of this section shall prohibit the removal of school library materials for the following reasons:

(1) partisan approval or disapproval;

(2) the author's race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, political views, or religious views;

(3) school board members' or members of the public's discomfort, personal morality, political views, or religious views;

(4) the author's point of view concerning the problems and issues of our time, whether international, national, or local;

(5) the race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, political views, or religious views of the protagonist or other characters; or

(6) content related to sexual health that addresses physical, mental, emotional, or social dimensions of human sexuality, including puberty, sex, and relationships.

(c) The policy and procedures required under subsection (a) of this section shall ensure that school library staff are responsible for curating and developing collections that provide students with access to a wide array of materials that are relevant to students' research, independent reading interests, and educational needs, as well as ensuring such materials are tailored to the cognitive and emotional levels of the children served by the school.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Secs. 2 (22 V.S.A. § 69; public libraries; selection and reconsideration of library materials) and 7a (16 V.S.A. § 1624; school library material selection policy) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(b) Sec. 7 (22 V.S.A. § 606; Dept. of Libraries; other duties and functions) shall take effect on January 1, 2025.

(c) This section and all other sections of this act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

Rep. Long of Newfane presiding.

Speaker presiding.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up and read the second time.

Pending the question, Shall the House propose to the Senate to amend the bill as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs?, **Rep. Toof of St. Albans Town** requested the vote be by division, and the proposal of amendment was agreed to: Yeas, 97 . Nays, 20.

Thereafter, third reading was ordered.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 192

Rep. Donahue of Northfield, for the Committee on Health Care, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to forensic facility admissions criteria and processes

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Purpose * * *

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this act to:

(1) enable the Commissioner of Mental Health to seek treatment and programming for certain individuals in a forensic facility as anticipated by the passage of 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 27; and

(2) update the civil commitment procedures for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

* * * Human Services Community Safety Panel * * *

Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. § 3098 is added to read:

§ 3098. HUMAN SERVICES COMMUNITY SAFETY PANEL

(a) There is hereby created the Human Services Community Safety Panel within the Agency of Human Services. The Panel shall be designated as the entity responsible for assessing the potential placement of individuals at a forensic facility pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4821 for individuals who:

(1) present a significant risk of danger to self or others if not held in a secure setting; and

(2)(A) are charged with a crime for which there is no right to bail pursuant to 13 V.S.A. §§ 7553 and 7553a and are found not competent to stand trial due to mental illness or intellectual disability; or

(B) were charged with a crime for which bail is not available and adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity.

(b)(1) The Panel shall comprise the following members:

(A) the Secretary of Human Services;

(B) the Commissioner of Mental Health; and

(C) the Commissioner of Corrections.

(2) The Panel shall have the technical, legal, fiscal, and administrative support of the Agency of Human Services and the Departments of Mental Health and of Corrections.

(c) As used in this section, “forensic facility” has the same meaning as in 18 V.S.A. § 7101.

Sec. 3. 13 V.S.A. § 4821 is amended to read:

§ 4821. NOTICE OF HEARING; PROCEDURES

(a) The person who is the subject of the proceedings, ~~his or her~~; the person’s attorney; the person’s legal guardian, if any; the Commissioner of Mental Health or the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living; and the State’s Attorney or other prosecuting officer representing the State in the case shall be given notice of the time and place of a hearing under section 4820 of this title. Procedures for hearings for persons with a mental illness shall be as provided in 18 V.S.A. chapter 181. Procedures for hearings for persons with an intellectual disability shall be as provided in 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3.

(b)(1) Once a report concerning competency or sanity is completed or disclosed to the opposing party, the Human Services Community Safety Panel established in 3 V.S.A. § 3098 may conduct a review on its own initiative regarding whether placement of the person who is the subject of the report is appropriate in a forensic facility. The review shall inform the Commissioner of Mental Health’s decision as to whether to seek placement of the person in a forensic facility.

(2)(A) If the Panel does not initiate its own review, a party to a hearing under section 4820 of this chapter may file a written motion to the court requesting that the Panel conduct a review within seven days after receiving a report under section 4816 of this chapter or within seven days after being adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity.

(B) A motion filed pursuant to this subdivision (2) shall specify that the person who is the subject of the proceedings is charged with a crime for which there is no right to bail pursuant to sections 7553 and 7553a of this title, and may include a person adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity, and that the person presents a significant risk of danger to themselves or the public if not held in a secure setting.

(C) The court shall rule on a motion filed pursuant to this subdivision (2) within five days. A Panel review ordered pursuant to this subdivision (2) shall be completed and submitted to the court at least three days prior to a hearing under section 4820 of this title.

(c) In conducting a review as to whether to seek placement of a person in a forensic facility, the Human Services Community Safety Panel shall consider the following criteria:

(1) clinical factors, including:

(A) that the person is served in the least restrictive setting necessary to meet the needs of the person; and

(B) that the person's treatment and programming needs dictate that the treatment or programming be provided at an intensive residential level; and

(2) risk of harm factors, including:

(A) whether the person has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury on another, attempted suicide or serious self-injury, or committed an act that would constitute sexual conduct with a child as defined in section 2821 of this title or lewd and lascivious conduct with a child as provided in section 2602 of this title, and there is reasonable probability that the conduct will be repeated if admission to a forensic facility is not ordered;

(B) whether the person has threatened to inflict serious bodily injury to the person or others and there is reasonable probability that the conduct will occur if admission to a forensic facility is not ordered;

(C) whether the results of any applicable evidence-based violence risk assessment tool indicates that the person's behavior is deemed a significant risk to others;

(D) the position of the parties to the criminal case as well as that of any victim as defined in subdivision 5301(4) of this title; and

(E) any other factors the Human Services Community Safety Panel determines to be relevant to the assessment of risk.

(d) As used in this chapter, "forensic facility" has the same meaning as in 18 V.S.A. § 7101.

* * * Admission to Forensic Facility for Persons in Need of Treatment or
Continued Treatment * * *

Sec. 4. 13 V.S.A. § 4822 is amended to read:

§ 4822. FINDINGS AND ORDER; PERSONS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

(a)(1) If the court finds that the person is a person in need of treatment or a patient in need of further treatment as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 7101, the court shall issue an order of commitment directed to the Commissioner of Mental Health that shall admit the person to the care and custody of the Department of Mental Health for an indeterminate a period of 90 days. In any case involving personal injury or threat of personal injury, the committing court may issue an order requiring a court hearing before a person committed under this section may be discharged from custody.

(2) If the Commissioner seeks to have a person receive treatment in a forensic facility pursuant to an order of nonhospitalization under subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Commissioner shall submit a petition to the court expressly stating that such treatment is being sought, including:

(A) a statement setting forth the reasons for the Commissioner's determination that clinically appropriate treatment for the person's condition can be provided safely only in a forensic facility; and

(B) the recommendation of the Human Services Community Safety Panel pursuant to section 4821 of this title.

(3) If the Commissioner determines that treatment at a forensic facility is appropriate, and the court finds that treatment at a forensic facility is the least restrictive setting adequate to meet the person's needs, the court shall order the person to receive treatment at a forensic facility for a period of 90 days. The court may, at any time following the issuance of an order, on its own motion or on motion of an interested party, review whether treatment at the forensic facility continues to be the least restrictive treatment option.

(b) An order of commitment issued pursuant to this section shall have the same force and effect as an order issued under 18 V.S.A. §§ 7611–7622, and a person committed under this order shall have the same status and the same rights, including the right to receive care and treatment, to be examined and discharged, and to apply for and obtain judicial review of ~~his or her~~ the person's case, as a person ordered committed under 18 V.S.A. §§ 7611–7622.

(c)(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, at least 10 days prior to the proposed discharge of any person committed under this section, the Commissioner of Mental Health shall give notice of the discharge to the committing court and State's Attorney of the county where the

prosecution originated. In all cases requiring a hearing prior to discharge of a person found incompetent to stand trial under section 4817 of this title, the hearing shall be conducted by the committing court issuing the order under that section. In all other cases, when the committing court orders a hearing under subsection (a) of this section or when, in the discretion of the Commissioner of Mental Health, a hearing should be held prior to the discharge, the hearing shall be held in the Family Division of the Superior Court to determine if the committed person is no longer a person in need of treatment or a patient in need of further treatment as set forth in subsection (a) of this section. Notice of the hearing shall be given to the Commissioner, the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated, the committed person, and the person's attorney. Prior to the hearing, the State's Attorney may enter an appearance in the proceedings and may request examination of the patient by an independent psychiatrist, who may testify at the hearing.

(2)(A) This subdivision (2) shall apply when a person is committed to the care and custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health under this section after having been found:

(i) not guilty by reason of insanity; or

(ii) incompetent to stand trial, provided that the person's criminal case has not been dismissed.

(B)(i) When a person has been committed under this section, the Commissioner shall provide notice to the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated or to the Office of the Attorney General if that office prosecuted the case:

(I) at least 10 days prior to discharging the person from:

(aa) the care and custody of the Commissioner; or

(bb) a hospital, a forensic facility, or a secure residential recovery facility to the community on an order of nonhospitalization pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 7618;

(II) at least 10 days prior to the expiration of a commitment order issued under this section if the Commissioner does not seek continued treatment; or

(III) any time that the person elopes from the custody of the Commissioner.

(ii) When the State's Attorney or Attorney General receives notice under subdivision (i) of this subdivision (B), the Office shall provide notice of the action to any victim of the offense for which the person has been charged who has not opted out of receiving notice. A victim receiving notice pursuant

to this subdivision (ii) has the right to submit a victim impact statement to the Family Division of the Superior Court in writing or through the State's Attorney or Attorney General's office.

(iii) As used in this subdivision (B), "victim" has the same meaning as in section 5301 of this title.

(d) The court may continue the hearing provided in subsection (c) of this section for a period of 15 additional days upon a showing of good cause.

(e) If the court determines that commitment shall no longer be necessary, it shall issue an order discharging the patient from the custody of the Department of Mental Health.

(f) The court shall issue its findings and order not later than 15 days from the date of hearing.

Sec. 5. 18 V.S.A. § 7101 is amended to read:

§ 7101. DEFINITIONS

As used in this part of this title, the following words, unless the context otherwise requires, shall have the following meanings:

* * *

(31)(A) "Forensic facility" means a residential facility, licensed as a therapeutic community residence as defined in 33 V.S.A. § 7102(11), for an individual initially committed pursuant to:

(i) 13 V.S.A. § 4822 who is in need of treatment or continued treatment pursuant to chapter 181 of this title within a secure setting for an extended period of time; or

(ii) 13 V.S.A. § 4823 who is in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation pursuant to chapter 206 of this title within a secure setting for an extended period of time.

(B) A forensic facility shall not be used for any purpose other than the purposes permitted by this part or chapter 206 of this title. As used in this subdivision (31), "secure" has the same meaning as in section 7620 of this title.

Sec. 6. 18 V.S.A. § 7620 is amended to read:

§ 7620. APPLICATION FOR CONTINUED TREATMENT

(a) If, prior to the expiration of any order issued in accordance with section 7623 of this title, the Commissioner believes that the condition of the patient is such that the patient continues to require treatment, the Commissioner shall

apply to the court for a determination that the patient is a patient in need of further treatment and for an order of continued treatment.

(b) An application for an order authorizing continuing treatment shall contain a statement setting forth the reasons for the Commissioner's determination that the patient is a patient in need of further treatment, a statement describing the treatment program provided to the patient, and the results of that course of treatment.

(c) Any order of treatment issued in accordance with section 7623 of this title shall remain in force pending the court's decision on the application.

(d) If the Commissioner seeks to have the patient receive the further treatment in a forensic facility or secure residential recovery facility, the application for an order authorizing continuing treatment shall expressly state that such treatment is being sought. The application shall contain, in addition to the statements required by subsection (b) of this section, a statement setting forth the reasons for the Commissioner's determination that clinically appropriate treatment for the patient's condition can be provided safely only in a secure residential recovery facility or forensic facility, as appropriate. An application for continued treatment in a forensic facility shall include the recommendation of the Human Services Community Safety Panel pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4821.

(e) As used in this chapter:

(1) "Secure," when describing a residential facility, means that the residents can be physically prevented from leaving the facility by means of locking devices or other mechanical or physical mechanisms.

(2) "Secure residential recovery facility" means a residential facility, licensed as a therapeutic community residence as defined in 33 V.S.A. § 7102(11), for an individual who no longer requires acute inpatient care but who does remain in need of treatment within a secure setting for an extended period of time. A secure residential recovery facility shall not be used for any purpose other than the purposes permitted by this section.

Sec. 7. 18 V.S.A. § 7621 is amended to read:

§ 7621. HEARING ON APPLICATION FOR CONTINUED TREATMENT;
ORDERS

* * *

(c) If the court finds that the patient is a patient in need of further treatment but does not require hospitalization, it shall order nonhospitalization for up to one year. If the treatment plan proposed by the Commissioner for a patient in

need of further treatment includes admission to a secure residential recovery facility or a forensic facility, the court may at any time, on its own motion or on motion of an interested party, review the need for treatment at the secure residential recovery facility or forensic facility, as applicable.

* * *

Sec. 8. 18 V.S.A. § 7624 is amended to read:

§ 7624. APPLICATION FOR INVOLUNTARY MEDICATION

(a) The Commissioner may commence an action for the involuntary medication of a person who is refusing to accept psychiatric medication and meets any one of the following ~~six~~ conditions:

(1) has been placed in the Commissioner's care and custody pursuant to section 7619 of this title or subsection 7621(b) of this title;

(2) has previously received treatment under an order of hospitalization and is currently under an order of nonhospitalization, including a person on an order of nonhospitalization who resides in a secure residential recovery facility;

(3) has been committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections as a convicted felon and is being held in a correctional facility that is a designated facility pursuant to section 7628 of this title and for whom the Departments of Corrections and of Mental Health have determined jointly that involuntary medication would be appropriate pursuant to 28 V.S.A. § 907(4)(H);

(4) has an application for involuntary treatment pending for which the court has granted a motion to expedite pursuant to subdivision 7615(a)(2)(A)(i) of this title;

(5)(A) has an application for involuntary treatment pending;

(B) waives the right to a hearing on the application for involuntary treatment until a later date; and

(C) agrees to proceed with an involuntary medication hearing without a ruling on whether ~~he or she~~ the person is a person in need of treatment; ~~or~~

(6) has been placed under an order of nonhospitalization in a forensic facility; or

(7) has had an application for involuntary treatment pending pursuant to subdivision 7615(a)(1) of this title for more than 26 days without a hearing having occurred and the treating psychiatrist certifies, based on specific

behaviors and facts set forth in the certification, that in ~~his or her~~ the psychiatrist's professional judgment there is good cause to believe that:

(A) additional time will not result in the person establishing a therapeutic relationship with providers or regaining competence; and

(B) serious deterioration of the person's mental condition is occurring.

(b)(1) Except as provided in subdivisions (2), (3), and (4) of this subsection, an application for involuntary medication shall be filed in the Family Division of the Superior Court in the county in which the person is receiving treatment.

(2) If the application for involuntary medication is filed pursuant to subdivision (a)(4) or (a)(6) of this section:

(A) the application shall be filed in the county in which the application for involuntary treatment is pending; and

(B) the court shall consolidate the application for involuntary treatment with the application for involuntary medication and rule on the application for involuntary treatment before ruling on the application for involuntary medication.

(3) If the application for involuntary medication is filed pursuant to subdivision (a)(5) or ~~(a)(6)(7)~~ of this section, the application shall be filed in the county in which the application for involuntary treatment is pending.

(4) Within 72 hours of the filing of an application for involuntary medication pursuant to subdivision ~~(a)(6)(7)~~ of this section, the court shall determine, based solely upon a review of the psychiatrist's certification and any other filings, whether the requirements of that subdivision have been established. If the court determines that the requirements of subdivision ~~(a)(6)(7)~~ of this section have been established, the court shall consolidate the application for involuntary treatment with the application for involuntary medication and hear both applications within 10 days after the date that the application for involuntary medication is filed. The court shall rule on the application for involuntary treatment before ruling on the application for involuntary medication. Subsection 7615(b) of this title shall apply to applications consolidated pursuant to this subdivision.

* * *

Sec. 9. 18 V.S.A. § 7627 is amended to read:

§ 7627. COURT FINDINGS; ORDERS

* * *

(o) For a person who is receiving treatment pursuant to an order of nonhospitalization in a forensic facility, if the court finds that without an order for involuntary medication there is a substantial probability that the person would continue to refuse medication and as a result would pose a danger of harm to self or others, the court may order administration of involuntary medications at a forensic facility for up to 90 days, unless the court finds that an order is necessary for a longer period of time. An order for involuntary medication pursuant to this subsection shall not be longer than the duration of the current order of nonhospitalization. If at any time the treating psychiatrist finds that a person subject to an order for involuntary medication has become competent pursuant to subsection 7625(c) of this title, the order shall no longer be in effect.

* * * Persons in Need of Custody, Care, and Habilitation or Continued
Custody, Care, and Habilitation * * *

Sec. 10. 13 V.S.A. § 4814 is amended to read:

§ 4814. ORDER FOR EXAMINATION OF COMPETENCY

* * *

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an examination ordered pursuant to subsection (a) of this section may be conducted by a doctoral-level psychologist trained in forensic psychology and licensed under 26 V.S.A. chapter 55. ~~This subsection shall be repealed on July 1, 2024.~~

* * *

Sec. 11. 13 V.S.A. § 4815 is amended to read:

§ 4815. PLACE OF EXAMINATION; TEMPORARY COMMITMENT

* * *

(b) The order for examination may provide for an examination at any jail or correctional center facility, or at the State Hospital, or at its successor in interest, or at such other place as the court shall determine, after hearing a recommendation by the Commissioner of Mental Health or the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent, as appropriate.

* * *

(d) Upon the making of a motion for examination, if the court finds sufficient facts to order an examination, the court shall order a ~~mental health~~ screening to be completed by a designated mental health professional or qualified intellectual disability professional, as appropriate, while the defendant is still at the court.

(e) If the screening cannot be commenced and completed at the courthouse within two hours from the time of the defendant's appearance before the court, the court may forgo consideration of the screener's recommendations.

(f) The court and parties shall review the recommendation of the designated ~~mental health~~ professional and consider the facts and circumstances surrounding the charge and observations of the defendant in court. If the court finds sufficient facts to order an examination, it may be ordered to be completed in the least restrictive environment deemed sufficient to complete the examination, consistent with subsection (a) of this section.

(g)(1) Inpatient examination at the Vermont State Hospital, or its successor in interest, or a designated hospital. The court shall not order an inpatient examination unless ~~the~~ a designated mental health professional determines that the defendant is a person in need of treatment as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 7101(17).

(2) Before ordering the inpatient examination, the court shall determine what terms, if any, shall govern the defendant's release from custody under sections 7553-7554 of this title.

(3) An order for inpatient examination shall provide for placement of the defendant in the custody and care of the Commissioner of Mental Health.

(A) If a Vermont State Hospital psychiatrist, or a psychiatrist of its successor in interest, or a designated hospital psychiatrist determines that the defendant is not in need of inpatient hospitalization prior to admission, the Commissioner shall release the defendant pursuant to the terms governing the defendant's release from the Commissioner's custody as ordered by the court. The Commissioner of Mental Health shall ensure that all individuals who are determined not to be in need of inpatient hospitalization receive appropriate referrals for outpatient mental health services.

(B) If a Vermont State Hospital psychiatrist, or a psychiatrist of its successor in interest, or designated hospital psychiatrist determines that the defendant is in need of inpatient hospitalization:

(i) The Commissioner of Mental Health shall obtain an appropriate inpatient placement for the defendant at the Vermont State Hospital psychiatrist, or a psychiatrist of its successor in interest, or a designated hospital and, based on the defendant's clinical needs, may transfer the defendant between hospitals at any time while the order is in effect. A transfer to a designated hospital outside the no refusal system is subject to acceptance of the patient for admission by that hospital.

(ii) The defendant shall be returned to court for further appearance on the following business day if the defendant is no longer in need of inpatient hospitalization, unless the terms established by the court pursuant to subdivision (2) of this section permit the defendant to be released from custody.

(C) The defendant shall be returned to court for further appearance within two business days after the Commissioner of Mental Health notifies the court that the examination has been completed, unless the terms established by the court pursuant to subdivision (2) of this section permit the defendant to be released from custody.

* * *

Sec. 12. 13 V.S.A. § 4816 is amended to read:

§ 4816. SCOPE OF EXAMINATION; REPORT; EVIDENCE

* * *

(b) A competency evaluation for an individual thought to have a ~~developmental~~ an intellectual disability shall ~~include~~ be a current evaluation by a doctoral-level psychologist trained in forensic psychology and licensed under 26 V.S.A. chapter 55 who is skilled in assessing individuals with ~~developmental~~ intellectual disabilities.

* * *

(e) The relevant portion of a psychiatrist's or psychologist's report shall be admitted into evidence as an exhibit on the issue of the person's mental competency to stand trial and the opinion shall be conclusive on the issue if agreed to by the parties and if found by the court to be relevant and probative on the issue.

(f) Introduction of a report under subsection (d) of this section shall not preclude either party or the court from calling the psychiatrist or psychologist who wrote the report as a witness or from calling witnesses or introducing other relevant evidence. Any witness called by either party on the issue of the defendant's competency shall be at the State's expense, or, if called by the court, at the court's expense.

Sec. 13. 13 V.S.A. § 4817 is amended to read:

§ 4817. COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL; DETERMINATION

* * *

(c) If a person indicted, complained, or informed against for an alleged criminal offense, an attorney or guardian acting in the person's behalf, or the State, at any time before final judgment, raises before the court before which such person is tried or is to be tried, the issue of whether such person is incompetent to stand trial, or if the court has reason to believe that such person may not be competent to stand trial, a hearing shall be held before such court at which evidence shall be received and a finding made regarding the person's competency to stand trial. However, in cases where the court has reason to believe that such person may be incompetent to stand trial due to a mental disease or mental defect, such hearing shall not be held until an examination has been made and a report submitted by an examining psychiatrist or psychologist in accordance with sections 4814–4816 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 14. 13 V.S.A. § 4820 is amended to read:

§ 4820. HEARING REGARDING COMMITMENT

(a)(1) When a person charged on information, complaint, or indictment with a criminal offense:

(1) ~~[Repealed.]~~

(2)(A) is found upon hearing pursuant to section 4817 of this title to be incompetent to stand trial due to a mental disease or mental defect;

(3)(B) is not indicted upon hearing by grand jury by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, duly certified to the court; or

(4)(C) upon trial by court or jury is acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense;

(2) ~~the~~ The court before which such person is tried or is to be tried for such offense, shall hold a hearing for the purpose of determining whether such person should be committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health or Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, as appropriate. Such person may be confined in jail or some other suitable place by order of the court pending hearing for a period not exceeding 21 days.

(b) When a person is found to be incompetent to stand trial, has not been indicted by reason of insanity for the alleged offense, or has been acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, the person shall be entitled to have counsel appointed from Vermont Legal Aid to represent the person. The Department of Mental Health and, if applicable, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall be entitled to appear and call witnesses at the proceeding.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a commitment order issued pursuant to this chapter shall not modify or vacate orders concerning conditions of release or bail issued pursuant to chapter 229 of this title, and the commitment order shall remain in place unless expressly modified, provided that inpatient treatment shall be permitted if a person who is held without bail is found to be in need of inpatient treatment under this chapter.

Sec. 15. 13 V.S.A. § 4823 is amended to read:

§ 4823. FINDINGS AND ORDER; PERSONS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITY

(a) If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that such person is a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 8839, the court shall issue an order of commitment for up to one year directed to the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living for placement in a designated program in the least restrictive environment consistent with the person's need for custody, care, and habilitation of such person for an indefinite or limited period in a designated program.

(b) Such order of commitment shall have the same force and effect as an order issued under 18 V.S.A. ~~§ 8843~~ chapter 206, subchapter 3 and persons committed under such an order shall have the same status, and the same rights, including the right to receive care and habilitation, to be examined and discharged, and to apply for and obtain judicial review of their cases, as persons ordered committed under 18 V.S.A. ~~§ 8843~~ chapter 206, subchapter 3.

~~(c) Section 4822 of this title shall apply to persons proposed for discharge under this section; however, judicial proceedings shall be conducted in the Criminal Division of the Superior Court in which the person then resides, unless the person resides out of State in which case the proceedings shall be conducted in the original committing court. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 16. 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3 is amended to read:

Subchapter 3. Judicial Proceeding; Persons with an Intellectual Disability
Who Present a Danger of Harm to Others

§ 8839. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) ~~“Danger of harm to others” means the person has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury to another or has committed an act that would constitute a sexual assault or lewd or lascivious conduct with a child~~ “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living.

(2) “Designated program” means a program designated by the Commissioner as adequate to provide in an individual manner appropriate custody, care, and habilitation to persons with intellectual disabilities receiving services under this subchapter.

(3)(A) “Person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation” means a person:

(i) who was previously found to be a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation;

(ii) who poses a danger of harm to others; and

(iii) for whom appropriate custody, care, and habilitation can be provided by the Commissioner in a designated program.

(B) As used in this subdivision (3), a danger of harm to others shall be shown by establishing that, in the time since the last order of commitment was issued, the person:

(i) has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury to another or has committed an act that would constitute sexual conduct with a child as defined in section 2821 of this title or lewd and lascivious conduct with a child as provided in section 2602 of this title; or

(ii) has exhibited behavior demonstrating that, absent treatment or programming provided by the Commissioner, there is a substantial likelihood that the person would inflict or attempt to inflict physical or sexual harm to another.

(4) “Person in need of custody, care, and habilitation” means a person:

(A) ~~a person~~ with an intellectual disability, which means significantly subaverage intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that were manifest before 18 years of age;

(B) ~~who presents a danger of harm to others~~ has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury to another or who has committed an act that would constitute sexual conduct with a child as defined in section 2821 of this title or lewd and lascivious conduct with a child as provided in section 2602 of this title; and

(C) for whom appropriate custody, care, and habilitation can be provided by the Commissioner in a designated program.

(5) “Victim” has the same meaning as in 13 V.S.A. § 5301(4).

§ 8840. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

~~Proceedings brought under this subchapter for commitment to the Commissioner for custody, care, and habilitation shall be commenced by petition in the Family Division of the Superior Court for the unit in which the respondent resides. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8841. PETITION; PROCEDURES

~~The filing of the petition and procedures for initiating a hearing shall be as provided in sections 8822-8826 of this title. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8842. HEARING

~~Hearings under this subchapter for commitment shall be conducted in accordance with section 8827 of this title. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8843. FINDINGS AND ORDER

~~(a) In all cases, the court shall make specific findings of fact and state its conclusions of law.~~

~~(b) If the court finds that the respondent is not a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation, it shall dismiss the petition.~~

~~(c) If the court finds that the respondent is a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation, it shall order the respondent committed to the custody of the Commissioner for placement in a designated program in the least restrictive environment consistent with the respondent's need for custody, care, and habilitation for an indefinite or a limited period. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8844. LEGAL COMPETENCE

~~No determination that a person is in need of custody, care, and habilitation or in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation and no order authorizing commitment shall lead to a presumption of legal incompetence.~~

§ 8845. JUDICIAL REVIEW PETITION AND ORDER FOR CONTINUED CUSTODY, CARE, AND HABILITATION

~~(a) A person committed under this subchapter may be discharged from custody by a Superior judge after judicial review as provided herein or by administrative order of the Commissioner.~~

~~(b) Procedures for judicial review of persons committed under this subchapter shall be as provided in section 8834 of this title, except that proceedings shall be brought in the Criminal Division of the Superior Court in the unit in which the person resides or, if the person resides out of state, in the unit that issued the original commitment order.~~

~~(e) A person committed under this subchapter shall be entitled to a judicial review annually. If no such review is requested by the person, it shall be initiated by the Commissioner. However, such person may initiate a judicial review under this subsection after 90 days after initial commitment but before the end of the first year of the commitment.~~

~~(d) If at the completion of the hearing and consideration of the record, the court finds at the time of the hearing that the person is still in need of custody, care, and habilitation, commitment shall continue for an indefinite or limited period. If the court finds at the time of the hearing that the person is no longer in need of custody, care, and habilitation, it shall discharge the person from the custody of the Commissioner. An order of discharge may be conditional or absolute and may have immediate or delayed effect.~~

(1) If, prior to the expiration of any previous commitment order issued in accordance with 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or this subchapter, the Commissioner believes that the person is a person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, the Commissioner shall seek continued custody, care, and habilitation in the Family Division of the Superior Court. The Commissioner shall, by filing a written petition, commence proceedings for the continued custody, care, and habilitation of a person. The petition shall state the current and relevant facts upon which the person's alleged need for continued custody, care, and habilitation is predicated.

(2) Any commitment order for custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation issued in accordance with 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or this subchapter shall remain in force pending the court's decision on the petition.

(b) Upon receipt of the petition for the continued custody, care, and habilitation, the court shall hold a hearing within 14 days after the date of filing.

(c) If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence at the time of the hearing that the person is a person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, it shall issue an order of commitment for up to one year in a designated program in the least restrictive environment consistent with the person's need for continued custody, care, and habilitation. If the court finds at the time of the hearing that the person is no longer in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, it shall discharge the person from the custody of the Commissioner in accordance with section 8847 of this subchapter. In determining whether a person is a person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, the court shall consider the degree to which the person has previously engaged in or complied with the treatment and programming provided by the Commissioner.

§ 8846. RIGHT TO INITIATE REVIEW

A person may initiate a judicial review in the Family Division of the Superior Court or an administrative review under this subchapter at any time after 90 days following a current order of commitment or continued commitment and not earlier than six months after the filing of a previous application under this section. If the court or Commissioner finds that the person is not a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation, the person shall be discharged from the custody of the Commissioner pursuant to section 8847 of this subchapter.

§ 8847. DISCHARGE FROM COMMITMENT

(a) A person committed under 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or this subchapter may be discharged as follows:

(1) by a Family Division Superior Court judge after review of an order of custody, care, and habilitation or an order of continued custody, care, and habilitation if the court finds that a person is not a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation, respectively; or

(2) by administrative order of the Commissioner regarding an order of custody, care, and habilitation or an order of continued custody, care, and habilitation if the Commissioner determines that a person is no longer a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation, respectively.

(b) A judicial or administrative order of discharge may be conditional or absolute and may have immediate or delayed effect.

(c)(1) When a person is under an order of commitment pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or continued commitment pursuant to this subchapter, the Commissioner shall provide notice to the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated or to the Office of the Attorney General if that Office prosecuted the case:

(A) at least 10 days prior to discharging a person from commitment or continued commitment;

(B) at least 10 days prior to the expiration of a commitment or continued commitment order if the Commissioner does not seek an order of continued custody, care, and habilitation; or

(C) any time that the person elopes from custody of the Commissioner and cannot be located, and there is reason to believe the person may be lost or poses a risk of harm to others.

(2) When the State's Attorney or Attorney General receives notice under subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Office shall provide notice of the action to any victim of the offense for which the person has been charged who has not opted out of receiving notice.

(d) Whenever a person is subject to a judicial or administrative discharge from commitment, the Criminal Division of the Superior Court shall retain jurisdiction over the person's underlying charge and any orders holding the person without bail or concerning bail, and conditions of release shall remain in place. Those orders shall be placed on hold while a person is in the custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation of the Commissioner. When a person is discharged from the Commissioner's custody, care, and habilitation to a correctional facility, the custody of the Commissioner shall cease when the person enters the correctional facility.

§ ~~8846~~ 8848. RIGHT TO COUNSEL

Persons subject to commitment ~~or judicial review under~~, continued commitment, or self-initiated review pursuant to section 8846 of this subchapter shall have a right to counsel as provided in section 7111 of this title.

* * * Proposal for Enhanced Services * * *

Sec. 17. INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES;

ENHANCED SERVICES

On or before December 1, 2024, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, in consultation with Disability Rights Vermont, Vermont Legal Aid, Developmental Services State Program Standing Committee, and Vermont Care Partners, may submit an alternative proposal to the forensic facility to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare for enhanced community-based services for those individuals committed to the Commissioner who require custody, care, and habilitation in a secure setting for brief periods of time. A proposal submitted pursuant to this subsection shall address required resources, including funding and staffing, and be eligible for funding through the Global Commitment Home- and Community-Based Services Waiver.

* * * Fiscal Estimate of Competency Restoration Program * * *

Sec. 18. REPORT; COMPETENCY RESTORATION PROGRAM; FISCAL

ESTIMATE

On or before November 1, 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall submit a report to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care,

and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare that provides a fiscal estimate for the implementation of a competency restoration program operated or under contract with the Department of Mental Health. The estimate shall include:

(1) whether and how to serve individuals with an intellectual disability in a competency restoration program;

(2) varying options dependent upon which underlying charges are eligible for court-ordered competency restoration; and

(3) costs associated with establishing a residential program where court-ordered competency restoration programming may be performed on an individual who is neither in the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4822 nor in the custody of the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4823.

* * * Rulemaking * * *

Sec. 19. RULEMAKING; CONFORMING AMENDMENTS

On or before November 1, 2024, the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, in consultation with the Commissioner of Mental Health, shall file initial proposed rule amendments with the Secretary of State pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 836(a)(2) to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, Licensing and Operating Regulations for Therapeutic Community Residences (CVR 13-110-12) for the purpose of:

(1) adding a forensic facility section of the rule that includes allowing the use of emergency involuntary procedures and the administration of involuntary medication at a forensic facility; and

(2) amending the secure residential recovery facility section of the rule to allow the use of emergency involuntary procedures and the administration of involuntary medication at the secure residential recovery facility.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 20. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024, except that Secs. 2–9 shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to forensic facility admission procedures for individuals with a mental illness and civil commitment procedures for individuals with an intellectual disability”

Rep. Berbeco of Winooski, for the Committee on Health Care, recommended that the report of the Committee on Human Services be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Purpose * * *

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this act to:

(1) enable the Commissioner of Mental Health to seek treatment for individuals at a secure residential recovery facility, regardless of a previous order of hospitalization, and at a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth; and

(2) update the civil commitment procedures for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

* * * Involuntary Commitment of Individuals with Mental Illness * * *

Sec. 2. 13 V.S.A. § 4822 is amended to read:

§ 4822. FINDINGS AND ORDER; PERSONS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

(a) If the court finds that the person is a person in need of treatment or a patient in need of further treatment as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 7101, the court shall issue an order of commitment directed to the Commissioner of Mental Health that shall admit the person to the care and custody of the Department of Mental Health for ~~an indeterminate~~ a period of 90 days. In any case involving personal injury or threat of personal injury, the committing court may issue an order requiring a court hearing before a person committed under this section may be discharged from custody.

* * *

(c)(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, at least 10 days prior to the proposed discharge of any person committed under this section, the Commissioner of Mental Health shall give notice of the discharge to the committing court and State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated. In all cases requiring a hearing prior to discharge of a person found incompetent to stand trial under section 4817 of this title, the hearing shall be conducted by the committing court issuing the order under that section. In all other cases, when the committing court orders a hearing under subsection (a) of this section or when, in the discretion of the Commissioner of Mental Health, a hearing should be held prior to the discharge, the hearing shall be held in the Family Division of the Superior Court to determine if the committed person is no longer a person in need of

treatment or a patient in need of further treatment as set forth in subsection (a) of this section. Notice of the hearing shall be given to the Commissioner, the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated, the committed person, and the person's attorney. Prior to the hearing, the State's Attorney may enter an appearance in the proceedings and may request examination of the patient by an independent psychiatrist, who may testify at the hearing.

(2)(A) This subdivision (2) shall apply when a person is committed to the care and custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health under this section after having been found:

(i) not guilty by reason of insanity; or

(ii) incompetent to stand trial, provided that the person's criminal case has not been dismissed.

(B)(i) When a person has been committed under this section, the Commissioner shall provide notice to the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated or to the Office of the Attorney General if that office prosecuted the case:

(I) at least 10 days prior to discharging the person from:

(aa) the care and custody of the Commissioner; or

(bb) a hospital or a secure residential recovery facility to the community on an order of nonhospitalization pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 7618;

(II) at least 10 days prior to the expiration of a commitment order issued under this section if the Commissioner does not seek continued treatment; or

(III) any time that the person elopes from the custody of the Commissioner.

(ii) When the State's Attorney or Attorney General receives notice under subdivision (i) of this subdivision (B), the Office shall provide notice of the action to any victim of the offense for which the person has been charged who has not opted out of receiving notice. A victim receiving notice pursuant to this subdivision (ii) has the right to submit a victim impact statement to the Family Division of the Superior Court in writing or through the State's Attorney or Attorney General's office.

(iii) As used in this subdivision (B), "victim" has the same meaning as in section 5301 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 7101 is amended to read:

§ 7101. DEFINITIONS

As used in this part of this title, the following words, unless the context otherwise requires, shall have the following meanings:

* * *

(31) “Department” means the Department of Mental Health.

(32) “Psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth” means a non-hospital facility that:

(A) serves individuals between 12 and 21 years of age;

(B) has a provider agreement with the Agency of Human Services to provide residential services to Medicaid-eligible individuals;

(C) is accredited by the Joint Commission or any other accrediting organization with comparable standards recognized by the Commissioner of Mental Health;

(D) meets the requirements in 42 C.F.R. §§ 441.151–441.182; and

(E) holds a license pursuant to section 7260 of this title.

(33) “Secure residential recovery facility” means a residential facility, licensed as a therapeutic community residence as defined in 33 V.S.A. § 7102(11), for an individual in need of treatment within a secure setting for an extended period of time. “Secure,” when describing a secure residential recovery facility, means that the residents can be physically prevented from leaving the facility by means of locking devices or other mechanical or physical mechanisms.

Sec. 4. 18 V.S.A. § 7253 is amended to read:

§ 7253. CLINICAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

The Commissioner of Mental Health, in consultation with health care providers as defined in section 9432 of this title, including designated hospitals, designated agencies, individuals with mental conditions or psychiatric disabilities, and other stakeholders, shall design and implement a clinical resource management system that ensures the highest quality of care and facilitates long-term, sustained recovery for individuals in the custody of the Commissioner.

(1) For the purpose of coordinating the movement of individuals across the continuum of care to the most appropriate services, the clinical resource management system shall:

* * *

(J) Ensure that individuals under the custody of the Commissioner being served in ~~a designated hospitals~~ hospital, ~~an~~ intensive residential recovery ~~facilities~~ facility, ~~a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth~~, and ~~the~~ a secure residential recovery facility shall have access to a mental health patient representative. The patient representative shall advocate for persons receiving services and shall also foster communication between persons receiving services and health care providers. The Department of Mental Health shall contract with an independent, peer-run organization to staff the full-time equivalent of a representative of persons receiving services.

* * *

Sec. 5. 18 V.S.A. § 7255 is amended to read:

§ 7255. SYSTEM OF CARE

The Commissioner of Mental Health shall coordinate a geographically diverse system and continuum of mental health care throughout the State that shall include at least the following:

- (1) comprehensive and coordinated community services, including prevention, to serve children, families, and adults at all stages of mental condition or psychiatric disability;
- (2) peer services, which may include:
 - (A) a warm line;
 - (B) peer-provided transportation services;
 - (C) peer-supported crisis services; and
 - (D) peer-supported hospital diversion services;
- (3) alternative treatment options for individuals seeking to avoid or reduce reliance on medications;
- (4) recovery-oriented housing programs;
- (5) intensive residential recovery facilities;
- (6) appropriate and adequate psychiatric inpatient capacity for voluntary patients;
- (7) appropriate and adequate psychiatric inpatient capacity for involuntary inpatient treatment services, including persons receiving treatment through court order from a civil or criminal court; ~~and~~
- (8) a secure residential recovery facility; and

(9) a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth.

Sec. 6. 18 V.S.A. § 7256 is amended to read:

§ 7256. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), the Department of Mental Health shall report annually on or before January 15 to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Committee on ~~Human Services~~ Health Care regarding the extent to which individuals with a mental health condition or psychiatric disability receive care in the most integrated and least restrictive setting available. The Department shall consider measures from a variety of sources, including the Joint Commission, the National Quality Forum, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The report shall address:

- (1) use of services across the continuum of mental health services;
- (2) adequacy of the capacity at each level of care across the continuum of mental health services;
- (3) individual experience of care and satisfaction;
- (4) individual recovery in terms of clinical, social, and legal results;
- (5) performance of the State's mental health system of care as compared to nationally recognized standards of excellence;
- (6) ways in which patient autonomy and self-determination are maximized within the context of involuntary treatment and medication;
- (7) the number of petitions for involuntary medication filed by the State pursuant to section 7624 of this title and the outcome in each case;
- (8) performance measures that demonstrate results and other data on individuals for whom petitions for involuntary medication are filed; and
- ~~(8)~~(9) progress on alternative treatment options across the system of care for individuals seeking to avoid or reduce reliance on medications, including supported withdrawal from medications.

Sec. 7. 18 V.S.A. § 7257 is amended to read:

§ 7257. REPORTABLE ADVERSE EVENTS

(a) An acute inpatient hospital, an intensive residential recovery facility, a designated agency, a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, or a secure residential recovery facility shall report to the Department of Mental Health instances of death or serious bodily injury to individuals with a mental

condition or psychiatric disability in the custody or temporary custody of the Commissioner.

* * *

Sec. 8. 18 V.S.A. § 7260 is added to read:

§ 7260. PSYCHIATRIC RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY FOR
YOUTH

(a) An applicant shall not establish, maintain, or operate a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth in this State without first obtaining a license from the Department of Health for the psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth in accordance with this section.

(b) Upon receipt of the application for a license, the Department of Health shall issue a license if it determines that the applicant and the proposed psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth meet the following minimum standards:

(1) The applicant shall demonstrate the capacity to operate a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth in accordance with rules adopted by the Department of Health and in a manner that ensures person-centered care and resident dignity in accordance with 42 C.F.R. § 441.151.

(2) The applicant shall demonstrate that its facility complies fully with standards for health, safety, and sanitation as required by State law, including standards set forth by the State Fire Marshal and the Department of Health, and municipal ordinance.

(3) The applicant shall have a clear process for responding to resident complaints.

(4) The psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, including the buildings and grounds, shall be subject to inspection by the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, its designees, and other authorized entities at all times.

(c) A license is not transferable or assignable and shall be issued only for the premises named in the application.

(d) Once licensed, a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth shall be among the placement options for individuals committed to the custody of the Commissioner under an order of nonhospitalization.

(e) The Department of Health shall adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to carry out the purposes of this section. Rules pertaining to emergency involuntary procedures shall:

(1) be identical to those rules adopted by the Department of Mental Health governing the use of emergency involuntary procedures in psychiatric inpatient units; and

(2) require that a certificate of need for all emergency involuntary procedures performed at the psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth be submitted to the Department and the Mental Health Care Ombudsman in the same manner and time frame as required for hospitals.

Sec. 9. 18 V.S.A. § 7503 is amended to read:

§ 7503. APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTARY ADMISSION

(a) Any person 14 years of age or over may apply for voluntary admission to a designated hospital or psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth for examination and treatment.

(b) Before the person may be admitted as a voluntary patient, the person shall give consent in writing on a form adopted by the Department. The consent shall include a representation that:

(1) the person understands that treatment will involve inpatient status or residence at a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth;

(2) the person desires to be admitted to ~~the~~ a hospital or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, respectively;

(3) the person consents to admission voluntarily, without any coercion or duress; and

(4) the person understands that inpatient treatment or residence at a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth may be on a locked unit, and a requested discharge may be deferred if the treating physician determines that the person is a person in need of treatment pursuant to section 7101 of this title.

(c) If the person is under 14 years of age, ~~he or she~~ the person may be admitted as a voluntary patient if ~~he or she~~ the person consents to admission, as provided in subsection (b) of this section, and if a parent or guardian makes written application.

Sec. 10. 18 V.S.A. § 7612 is amended to read:

§ 7612. APPLICATION FOR INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT

(a) An interested party may, by filing a written application, commence proceedings for the involuntary treatment of an individual by judicial process.

* * *

(d) The application shall contain:

(1) The name and address of the applicant.

(2) A statement of the current and relevant facts upon which the allegation of mental illness and need for treatment is based. The application shall be signed by the applicant under penalty of perjury.

(e) The application shall be accompanied by:

(1) a certificate of a licensed physician, which shall be executed under penalty of perjury stating that the physician has examined the proposed patient within five days after the date the petition is filed and is of the opinion that the proposed patient is a person in need of treatment, including the current and relevant facts and circumstances upon which the physician's opinion is based; or

(2) a written statement by the applicant that the proposed patient refused to submit to an examination by a licensed physician.

(f) Before an examining physician completes the certificate of examination, ~~he or she~~ the examining physician shall consider available alternative forms of care and treatment that might be adequate to provide for the person's needs without requiring hospitalization. The examining physician shall document on the certificate the specific alternative forms of care and treatment that ~~he or she~~ the examining physician considered and why those alternatives were deemed inappropriate, including information on the availability of any appropriate alternatives.

(g) If the Commissioner seeks to have the patient receive treatment in a secure residential recovery facility or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, the application for an order authorizing treatment shall expressly state that such treatment is being sought. The application shall contain, in addition to the statements required by subsections (d) and (e) of this section, a statement setting forth the reasons for the Commissioner's determination that clinically appropriate treatment for the patient's condition can be provided safely only in a secure residential recovery facility or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, respectively.

Sec. 11. 18 V.S.A. § 7618 is amended to read:

§ 7618. ORDER; NONHOSPITALIZATION

(a) If the court finds that a treatment program other than hospitalization is adequate to meet the person's treatment needs, the court shall order the person to receive whatever treatment other than hospitalization is appropriate for a period of 90 days. If the treatment plan proposed by the Commissioner for a secure residential recovery facility or a psychiatric residential treatment

facility for youth, the court may at any time, on its own motion or on a motion of an interested party, review the need for treatment at the secure residential recovery facility or the psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, respectively.

(b) If at any time during the specified period it comes to the attention of the court either that the patient is not complying with the order or that the alternative treatment has not been adequate to meet the patient's treatment needs, the court may, after proper hearing:

(1) consider other alternatives, modify its original order, and direct the patient to undergo another program of alternative treatment for the remainder of the 90-day period; or

(2) enter a new order directing that the patient be hospitalized for the remainder of the 90-day period.

Sec. 12. 18 V.S.A. § 7620 is amended to read:

§ 7620. APPLICATION FOR CONTINUED TREATMENT

* * *

(d) If the Commissioner seeks to have the patient receive the further treatment in a secure residential recovery facility or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, the application for an order authorizing continuing treatment shall expressly state that such treatment is being sought. The application shall contain, in addition to the statements required by subsection (b) of this section, a statement setting forth the reasons for the Commissioner's determination that clinically appropriate treatment for the patient's condition can be provided safely only in a secure residential recovery facility or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, respectively.

~~(e) As used in this chapter:~~

~~(1) "Secure," when describing a residential facility, means that the residents can be physically prevented from leaving the facility by means of locking devices or other mechanical or physical mechanisms.~~

~~(2) "Secure residential recovery facility" means a residential facility, licensed as a therapeutic community residence as defined in 33 V.S.A. § 7102(11), for an individual who no longer requires acute inpatient care but who does remain in need of treatment within a secure setting for an extended period of time. A secure residential recovery facility shall not be used for any purpose other than the purposes permitted by this section.~~

Sec. 13. 18 V.S.A. § 7621 is amended to read:

§ 7621. HEARING ON APPLICATION FOR CONTINUED TREATMENT;
ORDERS

* * *

(c) If the court finds that the patient is a patient in need of further treatment but does not require hospitalization, it shall order nonhospitalization for up to one year. If the treatment plan proposed by the Commissioner for a patient in need of further treatment includes admission to a secure residential recovery facility or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, the court may at any time, on its own motion or on motion of an interested party, review the need for treatment at the secure residential recovery facility or the psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, respectively.

* * *

Sec. 14. 18 V.S.A. § 7624 is amended to read:

§ 7624. APPLICATION FOR INVOLUNTARY MEDICATION

(a) The Commissioner may commence an action for the involuntary medication of a person who is refusing to accept psychiatric medication and meets any one of the following ~~six~~ conditions:

(1) has been placed in the Commissioner's care and custody pursuant to section 7619 of this title or subsection 7621(b) of this title;

(2) has previously received treatment under an order of hospitalization and is currently under an order of nonhospitalization, ~~including a person on an order of nonhospitalization who resides in a secure residential recovery facility~~;

(3) has been committed to the custody of the Commissioner on an order of nonhospitalization and has been placed at a secure residential recovery facility;

(4) has been committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections as a convicted felon and is being held in a correctional facility that is a designated facility pursuant to section 7628 of this title and for whom the Departments of Corrections and of Mental Health have determined jointly that involuntary medication would be appropriate pursuant to 28 V.S.A. § 907(4)(H);

~~(4)~~(5) has an application for involuntary treatment pending for which the court has granted a motion to expedite pursuant to subdivision 7615(a)(2)(A)(i) of this title;

~~(5)~~(6)(A) has an application for involuntary treatment pending;

(B) waives the right to a hearing on the application for involuntary treatment until a later date; and

(C) agrees to proceed with an involuntary medication hearing without a ruling on whether ~~he or she~~ the person is a person in need of treatment; or

~~(6)~~(7) has had an application for involuntary treatment pending pursuant to subdivision 7615(a)(1) of this title for more than 26 days without a hearing having occurred and the treating psychiatrist certifies, based on specific behaviors and facts set forth in the certification, that in ~~his or her~~ the psychiatrist's professional judgment there is good cause to believe that:

(A) additional time will not result in the person establishing a therapeutic relationship with providers or regaining competence; and

(B) serious deterioration of the person's mental condition is occurring.

(b)(1) Except as provided in subdivisions (2), ~~(3)~~(4), and ~~(4)~~(5) of this subsection, an application for involuntary medication shall be filed in the Family Division of the Superior Court in the county in which the person is receiving treatment.

(2) If the application for involuntary medication is filed pursuant to subdivision ~~(a)~~(4) ~~(a)~~(5) of this section:

(A) the application shall be filed in the county in which the application for involuntary treatment is pending; and

(B) the court shall consolidate the application for involuntary treatment with the application for involuntary medication and rule on the application for involuntary treatment before ruling on the application for involuntary medication.

(3) If the application for involuntary medication is filed pursuant to subdivision ~~(a)~~(5)~~(6)~~ or ~~(a)~~(6)~~(7)~~ of this section, the application shall be filed in the county in which the application for involuntary treatment is pending.

(4) Within 72 hours of the filing of an application for involuntary medication pursuant to subdivision ~~(a)~~(6)~~(7)~~ of this section, the court shall determine, based solely upon a review of the psychiatrist's certification and any other filings, whether the requirements of that subdivision have been established. If the court determines that the requirements of subdivision ~~(a)~~(6)~~(7)~~ of this section have been established, the court shall consolidate the application for involuntary treatment with the application for involuntary

medication and hear both applications within 10 days after the date that the application for involuntary medication is filed. The court shall rule on the application for involuntary treatment before ruling on the application for involuntary medication. Subsection 7615(b) of this title shall apply to applications consolidated pursuant to this subdivision.

* * *

Sec. 15. 18 V.S.A. § 7628 is amended to read:

§ 7628. PROTOCOL

The Department of Mental Health shall develop and adopt by rule a strict protocol to ensure the health, safety, dignity, and respect of patients subject to administration of involuntary psychiatric medications in any designated hospital or secure residential recovery facility. This protocol shall be followed by all designated hospitals and secure residential recovery facilities administering involuntary psychiatric medications.

Sec. 16. 18 V.S.A. § 7703 is amended to read:

§ 7703. TREATMENT

* * *

(b) The Department shall establish minimum standards for adequate treatment as provided in this section, including requirements that, when possible, psychiatric unit staff be used as the primary source to implement emergency involuntary procedures such as seclusion and restraint. The Department shall oversee and collect information and report on data regarding the use of emergency involuntary procedures for patients admitted to a psychiatric unit, a secure residential recovery facility, or a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, regardless of whether the patient is under the care and custody of the Commissioner.

* * * Policies Applicable to the Secure Residential Recovery Facility * * *

Sec. 17. RULEMAKING; SECURE RESIDENTIAL RECOVERY FACILITY

On or before August 1, 2024, the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, in consultation with the Commissioner of Mental Health, shall file permanent proposed rule amendments with the Secretary of State pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 836(a)(2) to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, Licensing and Operating Regulations for Therapeutic Community Residences (CVR 13-110-12) for the purpose of amending the secure residential recovery facility section of the rule. Prior to the permanent rules taking effect, the Department shall adopt similar emergency rules that

shall be deemed to have met the standard for emergency rulemaking in 3 V.S.A. § 844. Both the permanent and emergency rules shall:

(1) authorize the use of emergency involuntary procedures at a secure residential recovery facility in a manner identical to that required in rules adopted by the Department of Mental Health governing the use of emergency involuntary procedures in psychiatric inpatient units;

(2) require that a certificate of need for all emergency involuntary procedures performed at a secure residential recovery facility be submitted to the Department and the Mental Health Care Ombudsman in the same manner and time frame as required for hospitals; and

(3) authorize the administration of involuntary medication at a secure residential recovery facility in a manner identical to that required in rules adopted by the Department of Mental Health governing the use of the administration of involuntary medication in psychiatric inpatient units.

Sec. 18. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 3(c) is amended to read:

(c) The amount appropriated in subdivision (a)(1) of this section shall be used to construct a 16-bed Secure Residential Recovery Facility on Parcel ID# 200-5-003-001 as designated on the Town of Essex's Tax Parcel Maps for transitional support for individuals who are being discharged from inpatient psychiatric care. Through interior fit-up, versus building redesign, the 16-bed facility shall include two eight-bed wings designed with the capability to allow for separation of one wing from the main section of the facility, if necessary. Both wings shall be served by common clinical and activity spaces. ~~Neither wing shall include a locked seclusion area, and the facility shall not use emergency involuntary procedures.~~ Outdoor space shall be adequate for exercise and other activities but not less than 10,000 square feet.

Sec. 19. CERTIFICATE OF NEED

Notwithstanding the requirements of 18 V.S.A. chapter 221, subchapter 5, or any prior certificates of need issued pursuant to that subchapter, the secure residential recovery facility shall be authorized to:

(1) use emergency involuntary procedures; and

(2) accept patients under an initial commitment order.

Sec. 20. REPEAL; INVOLUNTARY MEDICATION REPORT

1998 Acts and Resolves No. 114, Sec. 5 (report) is repealed on July 1, 2024.

* * * Persons in Need of Custody, Care, and Habilitation or Continued
Custody, Care, and Habilitation * * *

Sec. 21. 13 V.S.A. § 4814 is amended to read:

§ 4814. ORDER FOR EXAMINATION OF COMPETENCY

* * *

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an examination ordered pursuant to subsection (a) of this section may be conducted by a doctoral-level psychologist trained in forensic psychology and licensed under 26 V.S.A. chapter 55. ~~This subsection shall be repealed on July 1, 2024.~~

* * *

Sec. 22. 13 V.S.A. § 4816 is amended to read:

§ 4816. SCOPE OF EXAMINATION; REPORT; EVIDENCE

* * *

(b) A competency evaluation for an individual thought to have a developmental disability shall ~~include~~ be a current evaluation by a doctoral-level psychologist trained in forensic psychology and skilled in assessing individuals with developmental disabilities.

* * *

(e) The relevant portion of a psychiatrist's report produced by a psychiatrist or psychologist, as described in subsection (c) of this section, shall be admitted into evidence as an exhibit on the issue of the person's mental competency to stand trial and the opinion shall be conclusive on the issue if agreed to by the parties and if found by the court to be relevant and probative on the issue.

(f) Introduction of a report under subsection (d) of this section shall not preclude either party or the court from calling the psychiatrist or psychologist as described in subsection (b) of this section who wrote the report as a witness or from calling witnesses or introducing other relevant evidence. Any witness called by either party on the issue of the defendant's competency shall be at the State's expense, or, if called by the court, at the court's expense.

Sec. 23. 13 V.S.A. § 4817 is amended to read:

§ 4817. COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL; DETERMINATION

* * *

(c) If a person indicted, complained, or informed against for an alleged criminal offense, an attorney or guardian acting in the person's behalf, or the State, at any time before final judgment, raises before the court before which such person is tried or is to be tried, the issue of whether such person is incompetent to stand trial, or if the court has reason to believe that such person may not be competent to stand trial, a hearing shall be held before such court at which evidence shall be received and a finding made regarding the person's competency to stand trial. However, in cases where the court has reason to believe that such person may be incompetent to stand trial due to a mental disease or mental defect, such hearing shall not be held until an examination has been made and a report submitted by an examining psychiatrist or psychologist in accordance with sections 4814-4816 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 24. 13 V.S.A. § 4820 is amended to read:

§ 4820. HEARING REGARDING COMMITMENT

(a)(1) When a person charged on information, complaint, or indictment with a criminal offense:

~~(1) [Repealed.]~~

~~(2)(A)~~ is found upon hearing pursuant to section 4817 of this title to be incompetent to stand trial due to a mental disease or mental defect;

~~(3)(B)~~ is not indicted upon hearing by grand jury by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, duly certified to the court; or

~~(4)(C)~~ upon trial by court or jury is acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense;.

(2) ~~the~~ The court before which such person is tried or is to be tried for such offense, shall hold a hearing for the purpose of determining whether such person should be committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health or Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, as appropriate. Such person may be confined in jail or some other suitable place by order of the court pending hearing for a period not exceeding 21 days.

(b) When a person is found to be incompetent to stand trial, has not been indicted by reason of insanity for the alleged offense, or has been acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, the person shall be entitled to have counsel appointed from Vermont Legal Aid to represent the person. The Department of Mental Health and, if applicable, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall be entitled to appear and call witnesses at the proceeding.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a commitment order issued pursuant to this chapter shall not modify or vacate orders concerning conditions of release or bail issued pursuant to chapter 229 of this title, and the commitment order shall remain in place unless expressly modified, provided that inpatient treatment shall be permitted if a person who is held without bail is found to be in need of inpatient treatment under this chapter.

Sec. 25. 13 V.S.A. § 4823 is amended to read:

§ 4823. FINDINGS AND ORDER; PERSONS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITY

(a) If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that such person is a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 8839, the court shall issue an order of commitment for up to one year directed to the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living for placement in a designated program in the least restrictive environment consistent with the person's need for custody, care, and habilitation of such person for an indefinite or limited period in a designated program.

(b) Such order of commitment shall have the same force and effect as an order issued under 18 V.S.A. ~~§ 8843~~ chapter 206, subchapter 3 and persons committed under such an order shall have the same status, and the same rights, including the right to receive care and habilitation, to be examined and discharged, and to apply for and obtain judicial review of their cases, as persons ordered committed under 18 V.S.A. ~~§ 8843~~ chapter 206, subchapter 3.

~~(c) Section 4822 of this title shall apply to persons proposed for discharge under this section; however, judicial proceedings shall be conducted in the Criminal Division of the Superior Court in which the person then resides, unless the person resides out of State in which case the proceedings shall be conducted in the original committing court. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 26. 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3 is amended to read:

Subchapter 3. Judicial Proceeding; Persons with an Intellectual Disability
Who Present a Danger of Harm to Others

§ 8839. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) ~~“Danger of harm to others” means the person has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury to another or has committed an act that would constitute a sexual assault or lewd or lascivious conduct with a child~~ “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living.

(2) “Designated program” means a program designated by the Commissioner as adequate to provide in an individual manner appropriate custody, care, and habilitation to persons with intellectual disabilities receiving services under this subchapter.

(3)(A) “Person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation” means a person:

(i) who was previously found to be a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation;

(ii) who poses a danger of harm to others; and

(iii) for whom appropriate custody, care, and habilitation can be provided by the Commissioner in a designated program.

(B) As used in this subdivision (3), a danger of harm to others shall be shown by establishing that, in the time since the last order of commitment was issued, the person:

(i) has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury to another or has committed an act that would constitute sexual conduct with a child as defined in section 2821 of this title or lewd and lascivious conduct with a child as provided in section 2602 of this title; or

(ii) has exhibited behavior demonstrating that, absent treatment or programming provided by the Commissioner, there is a substantial likelihood that the person would inflict or attempt to inflict physical or sexual harm to another.

(4) “Person in need of custody, care, and habilitation” means a person:

(A) ~~a person~~ with an intellectual disability, which means significantly subaverage intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that were manifest before 18 years of age;

(B) ~~who presents a danger of harm to others~~ has inflicted or attempted to inflict serious bodily injury to another or who has committed an act that would constitute sexual conduct with a child as defined in section 2821 of this title or lewd and lascivious conduct with a child as provided in section 2602 of this title; and

(C) for whom appropriate custody, care, and habilitation can be provided by the Commissioner in a designated program.

(5) “Victim” has the same meaning as in 13 V.S.A. § 5301(4).

§ 8840. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

~~Proceedings brought under this subchapter for commitment to the Commissioner for custody, care, and habilitation shall be commenced by petition in the Family Division of the Superior Court for the unit in which the respondent resides. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8841. PETITION; PROCEDURES

~~The filing of the petition and procedures for initiating a hearing shall be as provided in sections 8822-8826 of this title. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8842. HEARING

~~Hearings under this subchapter for commitment shall be conducted in accordance with section 8827 of this title. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8843. FINDINGS AND ORDER

~~(a) In all cases, the court shall make specific findings of fact and state its conclusions of law.~~

~~(b) If the court finds that the respondent is not a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation, it shall dismiss the petition.~~

~~(c) If the court finds that the respondent is a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation, it shall order the respondent committed to the custody of the Commissioner for placement in a designated program in the least restrictive environment consistent with the respondent's need for custody, care, and habilitation for an indefinite or a limited period. [Repealed.]~~

§ 8844. LEGAL COMPETENCE

~~No determination that a person is in need of custody, care, and habilitation or in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation and no order authorizing commitment shall lead to a presumption of legal incompetence.~~

§ 8845. JUDICIAL REVIEW PETITION AND ORDER FOR CONTINUED CUSTODY, CARE, AND HABILITATION

~~(a) A person committed under this subchapter may be discharged from custody by a Superior judge after judicial review as provided herein or by administrative order of the Commissioner.~~

~~(b) Procedures for judicial review of persons committed under this subchapter shall be as provided in section 8834 of this title, except that proceedings shall be brought in the Criminal Division of the Superior Court in the unit in which the person resides or, if the person resides out of state, in the unit that issued the original commitment order.~~

~~(e) A person committed under this subchapter shall be entitled to a judicial review annually. If no such review is requested by the person, it shall be initiated by the Commissioner. However, such person may initiate a judicial review under this subsection after 90 days after initial commitment but before the end of the first year of the commitment.~~

~~(d) If at the completion of the hearing and consideration of the record, the court finds at the time of the hearing that the person is still in need of custody, care, and habilitation, commitment shall continue for an indefinite or limited period. If the court finds at the time of the hearing that the person is no longer in need of custody, care, and habilitation, it shall discharge the person from the custody of the Commissioner. An order of discharge may be conditional or absolute and may have immediate or delayed effect.~~

(1) If, prior to the expiration of any previous commitment order issued in accordance with 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or this subchapter, the Commissioner believes that the person is a person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, the Commissioner shall seek continued custody, care, and habilitation in the Family Division of the Superior Court. The Commissioner shall, by filing a written petition, commence proceedings for the continued custody, care, and habilitation of a person. The petition shall state the current and relevant facts upon which the person's alleged need for continued custody, care, and habilitation is predicated.

(2) Any commitment order for custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation issued in accordance with 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or this subchapter shall remain in force pending the court's decision on the petition.

(b) Upon receipt of the petition for the continued custody, care, and habilitation, the court shall hold a hearing within 14 days after the date of filing.

(c) If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence at the time of the hearing that the person is a person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, it shall issue an order of commitment for up to one year in a designated program in the least restrictive environment consistent with the person's need for continued custody, care, and habilitation. If the court finds at the time of the hearing that the person is no longer in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, it shall discharge the person from the custody of the Commissioner in accordance with section 8847 of this subchapter. In determining whether a person is a person in need of continued custody, care, and habilitation, the court shall consider the degree to which the person has previously engaged in or complied with the treatment and programming provided by the Commissioner.

§ 8846. RIGHT TO INITIATE REVIEW

A person may initiate a judicial review in the Family Division of the Superior Court or an administrative review under this subchapter at any time after 90 days following a current order of commitment or continued commitment and not earlier than six months after the filing of a previous application under this section. If the court or Commissioner finds that the person is not a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation, the person shall be discharged from the custody of the Commissioner pursuant to section 8847 of this subchapter.

§ 8847. DISCHARGE FROM COMMITMENT

(a) A person committed under 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or this subchapter may be discharged as follows:

(1) by a Family Division Superior Court judge after review of an order of custody, care, and habilitation or an order of continued custody, care, and habilitation if the court finds that a person is not a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation, respectively; or

(2) by administrative order of the Commissioner regarding an order of custody, care, and habilitation or an order of continued custody, care, and habilitation if the Commissioner determines that a person is no longer a person in need of custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation, respectively.

(b) A judicial or administrative order of discharge may be conditional or absolute and may have immediate or delayed effect.

(c)(1) When a person is under an order of commitment pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4823 or continued commitment pursuant to this subchapter, the Commissioner shall provide notice to the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated or to the Office of the Attorney General if that Office prosecuted the case:

(A) at least 10 days prior to discharging a person from commitment or continued commitment;

(B) at least 10 days prior to the expiration of a commitment or continued commitment order if the Commissioner does not seek an order of continued custody, care, and habilitation; or

(C) any time that the person elopes from custody of the Commissioner and cannot be located, and there is reason to believe the person may be lost or poses a risk of harm to others.

(2) When the State's Attorney or Attorney General receives notice under subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Office shall provide notice of the action to any victim of the offense for which the person has been charged who has not opted out of receiving notice.

(d) Whenever a person is subject to a judicial or administrative discharge from commitment, the Criminal Division of the Superior Court shall retain jurisdiction over the person's underlying charge and any orders holding the person without bail or concerning bail, and conditions of release shall remain in place. Those orders shall be placed on hold while a person is in the custody, care, and habilitation or continued custody, care, and habilitation of the Commissioner. When a person is discharged from the Commissioner's custody, care, and habilitation to a correctional facility, the custody of the Commissioner shall cease when the person enters the correctional facility.

§ ~~8846~~ 8848. RIGHT TO COUNSEL

Persons subject to commitment ~~or judicial review under~~, continued commitment, or self-initiated review pursuant to section 8846 of this subchapter shall have a right to counsel as provided in section 7111 of this title.

* * * Proposal for Enhanced Services * * *

Sec. 27. INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES;

ENHANCED SERVICES

On or before December 1, 2024, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, in consultation with Disability Rights Vermont, Vermont Legal Aid, Developmental Services State Program Standing Committee, and Vermont Care Partners, may submit an alternative proposal to the forensic facility to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare for enhanced community-based services for those individuals committed to the Commissioner who require custody, care, and habilitation in a secure setting for brief periods of time. A proposal submitted pursuant to this subsection shall address required resources, including funding and staffing, and be eligible for funding through the Global Commitment Home- and Community-Based Services Waiver.

* * * Fiscal Estimate of Competency Restoration Program * * *

Sec. 28. REPORT; COMPETENCY RESTORATION PROGRAM; FISCAL

ESTIMATE

On or before November 1, 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall submit a report to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care,

and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare that provides a fiscal estimate for the implementation of a competency restoration program operated or under contract with the Department of Mental Health. The estimate shall include:

(1) whether and how to serve individuals with an intellectual disability in a competency restoration program;

(2) varying options dependent upon which underlying charges are eligible for court-ordered competency restoration; and

(3) costs associated with establishing a residential program where court-ordered competency restoration programming may be performed on an individual who is neither in the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4822 nor in the custody of the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4823.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 29. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to civil commitment procedures at a secure residential recovery facility and a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth and civil commitment procedures for individuals with an intellectual disability”

Rep. Dolan of Essex Junction, for the Committee on Judiciary, recommended that the report of the Committee on Health Care be amended as follows:

First: By inserting a new section to be Sec. 17a to read as follows:

Sec. 17a. JUDICIAL REVIEW; RESIDENTS OF SECURE RESIDENTIAL RECOVERY FACILITY

Between July 1, 2024 and July 1, 2025, an individual who has been committed to the custody of the Commissioner at the secure residential recovery facility continuously since June 30, 2024 or earlier may apply to the Family Division of the Superior Court for a review as to whether the secure residential recovery facility continues to be the most appropriate and least restrictive setting necessary to serve the individual.

Second: By striking out Sec. 22, 13 V.S.A. § 4816, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 22 to read as follows:

Sec. 22. 13 V.S.A. § 4816 is amended to read:

§ 4816. SCOPE OF EXAMINATION; REPORT; EVIDENCE

* * *

(b) A competency evaluation for an individual thought to have a developmental disability shall ~~include~~ be a current evaluation by a doctoral-level psychologist trained in forensic psychology and skilled in assessing individuals with developmental disabilities.

* * *

Third: In Sec. 26, 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3, in section 8839, in subdivisions (3)(B)(i) and (4)(B) by striking out “section 2821 of this title” and inserting in lieu thereof “13 V.S.A. § 2821” in both instances in which it appears and by striking out “section 2602 of this title” and inserting in lieu thereof “13 V.S.A. § 2602” in both instances in which it appears

Fourth: In Sec. 26, 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3, in section 8845, in subsection (b), by inserting a second sentence to read as follows:

“The hearing may be continued for good cause shown.”

Fifth: In Sec. 26, 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3, in section 8847, in subsection (b), by striking out “and may have immediate or delayed effect”

Sixth: In Sec. 26, 18 V.S.A. chapter 206, subchapter 3, in section 8847, in subdivision (c)(2), by inserting a second sentence to read as follows:

“A victim receiving notice pursuant to this subdivision has the right to submit a victim impact statement to the Family Division of the Superior Court in writing or through the State’s Attorney’s or Attorney General’s Office.”

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Health Care was amended as recommended by the Committee on Judiciary.

Pending the question, Shall the report of the Committee on Human Services be amended as recommended by the Committee on Health Care, as amended?, **Rep. Donahue of Northfield** moved to amend the report of the Committee on Health Care, as amended, as follows:

First: In Sec. 3, 18 V.S.A. § 7101, by striking out subdivision (32) in its entirety and inserting a new subdivision (32) to read as follows:

(32) “Psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth” means a non-hospital inpatient facility that serves individuals between 12 and 21 years of age with complex mental health conditions under the direction of a physician.

Second: By striking out Sec. 8, 18 V.S.A. § 7260, in its entirety and inserting a new Sec. 8 to read as follows:

Sec. 8. 18 V.S.A. § 7260 is added to read:

§ 7260. PSYCHIATRIC RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY FOR
YOUTH

(a) A person or governmental entity shall not establish, maintain, or operate a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth without first obtaining a license from the Department of Health in accordance with this section.

(b) Upon receipt of the application for a license, the Department of Health shall issue a license if it determines that the applicant and the proposed psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth meet the following minimum standards:

(1) The applicant shall be a nonprofit entity and demonstrate the capacity to operate a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth in accordance with rules adopted by the Department of Health and in a manner that ensures person-centered care and resident dignity.

(2) The applicant shall maintain certification from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under 42 C.F.R. §§ 441.151–182.

(3) The applicant shall maintain accreditation by the Joint Commission or other accrediting organization with comparable standards recognized by the Commissioner of Mental Health.

(4) The applicant shall fully comply with standards for health, safety, and sanitation as required by State law, including standards set forth by the State Fire Marshal and the Department of Health, and municipal ordinance.

(5) Residents admitted to a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth shall be under the care of physician licensed pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 23 or 33.

(6) The psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth, including the buildings and grounds, shall be subject to inspection by the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, its designees, and other authorized entities at all times.

(7) The applicant shall have a clear process for responding to resident complaints, including:

(A) the designation of patient representative pursuant to section 7352 of this title;

(B) a method by which each patient shall be made aware of the compliant procedure;

(C) an appeals mechanism within a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth;

(D) a published time frame for processing and resolving complaints and appeals within a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth; and

(E) periodic reporting to the Department of Health of the nature of complaints filed and action taken.

(c) A license is not transferable or assignable and shall be issued only for the premises named in the application.

(d) Once licensed, a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth shall be among the placement options for individuals committed to the custody of the Commissioner under an order of nonhospitalization.

(e) The Department of Health shall adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to carry out the purposes of this section. Rules pertaining to emergency involuntary procedures shall:

(1) be identical to those rules adopted by the Department of Mental Health governing the use of emergency involuntary procedures in psychiatric inpatient units;

(2) require that a certificate of need for all emergency involuntary procedures performed at the psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth be submitted to the Department and the Mental Health Care Ombudsman in the same manner and time frame as required for hospitals; and

(3) require that data regarding the use of emergency involuntary procedures be submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Department.

(f) The Department of Health, after notice and opportunity for a hearing to the applicant or licensee, is authorized to deny, suspend, or revoke a license in any case in which it finds that there has been a substantial failure to comply with the requirements established under this section. The notice shall be served by registered mail or by personal service setting forth the reasons for the proposed action and fixing a date not less than 60 days from the date of the mailing or service, at which the applicant or licensee shall be given an opportunity for a hearing. After the hearing, or upon default of the applicant of licensee, the Department of Health shall file its findings of fact and conclusions of law. A copy of the findings and decision shall be sent by registered mail or served personally upon the applicant or licensee. The

procedure governing hearings authorized by the section shall be in accordance with the usual and customary rules for hearing.

Which was agreed to.

Pending the question, Shall the report of the Committee on Human Services be amended as recommended by the Committee on Health Care, as amended?, **Rep. Donahue of Northfield** moved to further amend the report of the Committee on Health Care, as amended, as follows:

First: In Sec. 6, 18 V.S.A. 7256, by inserting a new subdivision (8) after subdivision (7) to read as follows:

(8) barriers to discharge from mental health inpatient and secure residential levels of care, including recommendations on how to address those barriers;

and by renumbering the remaining subdivisions to be numerically correct.

Second: By inserting a Sec. 7a after Sec. 7, 18 V.S.A. § 7257, to read as follows:

Sec. 7a. 18 V.S.A. § 7259 is amended to read:

§ 7259. MENTAL HEALTH CARE OMBUDSMAN

* * *

(d) The Department of Mental Health shall provide any reportable adverse events reported pursuant to section 7257 of this title and a copy of the certificate of need for all emergency involuntary procedures performed on a person in the custody or temporary custody of the Commissioner to the Office of the Mental Health Care Ombudsman on a monthly basis.

Third: In Sec. 8, 18 V.S.A. § 7260, in subsection (b), in subdivision (1), by striking out the word “demonstrate” and inserting lieu thereof “be a nonprofit entity that demonstrates”

Fourth: By inserting Secs. 9a and 9b after Sec. 9, 18 V.S.A. § 7503, to read as follows:

Sec. 9a. 18 V.S.A. § 7509 is amended to read:

§ 7509. TREATMENT; RIGHT OF ACCESS

(a) Upon admission to ~~the a~~ a hospital, secure residential recovery facility, or psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth pursuant to section 7503, 7508, 7617, or 7624 of this title, the person shall be treated with dignity and respect and shall be given such medical and psychiatric treatment as is indicated.

* * *

(c) The person shall be requested to furnish the names of persons ~~he or she~~ that the person may want notified of ~~his or her~~ the person's hospitalization ~~or residence~~ and kept informed of ~~his or her~~ the person's status. The head of the hospital shall see that such persons are notified of the status of the ~~patient person~~, how ~~he or she~~ the person may be contacted and visited, and how they may obtain information concerning ~~him or her~~ the person.

Sec. 9b. 18 V.S.A. § 7511 is amended to read:

§ 7511. TRANSPORTATION

(a) The Commissioner shall ensure that all reasonable and appropriate measures consistent with public safety are made to transport or escort a person subject to this chapter to and from any ~~inpatient setting~~ hospital, secure residential recovery facility, or psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner in any manner that:

- (1) prevents physical and psychological trauma;
- (2) respects the privacy of the individual; and
- (3) represents the least restrictive means necessary for the safety of the patient.

* * *

Fifth: By inserting a Sec. 15a after Sec. 15, 18 V.S.A. § 7628, to read as follows:

Sec. 15a. 18 V.S.A. § 7701 is amended to read:

§ 7701. NOTICE OF RIGHTS

~~The head of a~~ A hospital, secure residential recovery facility, and psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth shall provide reasonable means and arrangements, including the posting of excerpts from relevant statutes, for informing patients of their right to discharge and other rights and for assisting them in making and presenting requests for discharge or for application to have the patient's status changed from involuntary to voluntary.

Which was agreed to. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Human Services was amended as recommended by the Committee on Health Care, as amended.

Thereafter, the report of the Committee on Human Services, as amended, was agreed to and third reading ordered.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 195**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to how a defendant's criminal record is considered in imposing conditions of release

Was taken up and, pending third reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. LaLonde of South Burlington**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 302**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to public health outreach programs regarding dementia risk

Was taken up and, pending second reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. Hyman of South Burlington**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 25**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to regulating cosmetic and menstrual products containing certain chemicals and chemical classes and textiles and athletic turf fields containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances

Was taken up and, pending consideration of the Senate proposal of amendment to the House proposal of amendment, on motion of **Rep. Whitman of Bennington**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 114**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to the establishment of the Psychedelic Therapy Advisory Working Group

Was taken up and, pending consideration of the Senate proposal of amendment, on motion of **Rep. Garofano of Essex**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 167**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to education law

Was taken up and, pending second reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. Conlon of Cornwall**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 183**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to reenvisioning the Agency of Human Services

Was taken up and, pending second reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. Brumsted of Shelburne**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 253**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to building energy codes

Was taken up and, pending second reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. Stebbins of Burlington**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 305**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous changes related to the Public Utility Commission

Was taken up and, pending second reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. Patt of Worcester**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed**S. 159**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to the County and Regional Governance Study Committee

Was taken up and, pending second reading of the bill, on motion of **Rep. Nugent of South Burlington**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 655

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to qualifying offenses for sealing criminal history records and access to sealed criminal history records

Was taken up and pending the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal of amendment?, on motion of **Rep. Dolan of Essex Junction**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 687

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to community resilience and biodiversity protection through land use

Was taken up and pending the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal of amendment?, on motion of **Rep. Satcowitz of Randolph**, action on the bill was postponed until May 7, 2024.

Leave of House Granted; Vote Changed

Pursuant to House Rule 74, **Rep. Donahue of Northfield** asked and was granted leave of the House to change her vote on S. 259, An act relating to climate change cost recovery, on the question, Shall the bill pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment? This vote has been changed accordingly in this day's Journal entry on that roll call vote.

Adjournment

At five o'clock and forty-one minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at ten o'clock in the forenoon.