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H.242

Introduced by Representatives Jerman of Essex, Botzow of Pownal, Branagan
of Georgia, Burke of Brattleboro, Buxton of Tunbridge, Carr of
Brandon, Christie of Hartford, Cross of Winooski, Dickinson of
St. Albans Town, Evans of Essex, Feltus of Lyndon, Frank of
Underhill, Komline of Dorset, Krebs of South Hero, Krowinski
of Burlington, Lanpher of Vergennes, Lenes of Shelburne,
Lippert of Hinesburg, Macaig of Williston, Malcolm of Pawlet,
Masland of Thetford, McCormack of Burlington, Miller of
Shaftsbury, Mook of Bennington, Moran of Wardsboro,
Mrowicki of Putney, Nuovo of Middlebury, O'Sullivan of
Burlington, Pearson of Burlington, Peltz of Woodbury, Potter of
Clarendon, Rachelson of Burlington, Ram of Burlington,
Russell of Rutland City, Spengler of Colchester, Stevens of
Waterbury, Strong of Albany, Till of Jericho, Waite-Simpson of
Essex, Weed of Enosburgh, Wright of Burlington, and
Yantachka of Charlotte

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; postsecondary education; Vermont Strong Scholars
Program

1 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a
2 Vermont Strong Scholars Program that would repay a portion of postsecondary
3 tuition debt for Vermont residents who are graduated from a Vermont public or
4 independent postsecondary institution with either a bachelor's degree in
5 science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM), a bachelor's degree in
6 education with a concentration in a STEM subject, or an associate's degree in
7 science or applied science and who work in Vermont after graduation in a field
8 related to the degree.

9 An act relating to creating the Vermont Strong Scholars Program

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

11 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 90 is redesignated to read:

12 CHAPTER 90. FUNDING OF POSTSECONDARY ~~INSTITUTIONS~~

13 EDUCATION

14 Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 2888 is added to read:

15 § 2888. VERMONT STRONG SCHOLARS PROGRAM

16 (a) Program creation. There is created a Vermont Strong Scholars Program
17 to repay a portion of a Vermont resident's postsecondary debt in order to
18 encourage Vermonters majoring in science, technology, engineering, or math
19 (STEM) to remain in Vermont upon earning a bachelor's or associate's degree
20 from a Vermont public or independent postsecondary institution. The

1 Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, in consultation with the
2 Secretary of Education, shall determine eligibility for the Program and develop
3 all organizational details consistent with the purposes and requirements of this
4 section.

5 (b) Fund creation.

6 (1) There is created a special fund to be known as the Vermont Strong
7 Scholars Fund pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5. The Fund shall
8 be established and held separate and apart from any other funds or monies of
9 the State and shall be used and administered solely for the purposes of this
10 section. The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development may draw
11 warrants for disbursements from the Fund in anticipation of receipts. Any
12 remaining balance at the end of the fiscal year shall be carried forward in the
13 Fund.

14 (2) The Fund shall consist of:

15 (A) sums appropriated or transferred from the General Fund from
16 time to time by the General Assembly;

17 (B) interest earned from the investment of Fund balances; and

18 (C) any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit
19 of the Fund.

20 (3) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall
21 administer the Fund or may contract for its administration. The administrator

1 may require certification of compliance with this section prior to making an
2 award, including certification that the amount of the eligible individual's
3 outstanding debt arising solely from postsecondary tuition exceeds the total
4 amount to be paid under this section.

5 (c) Criteria.

6 (1) Tuition repayment awards shall be provided in exchange for a
7 commitment from an eligible individual to work in Vermont following
8 postsecondary graduation for the three- or five-year period of tuition
9 repayment under this section.

10 (2) An individual shall be eligible for an award under this section if he
11 or she:

12 (A) is a graduate of a Vermont public secondary school or an
13 approved or recognized independent secondary school located in Vermont or
14 was a home study student classified as a Vermont resident by the
15 postsecondary institution from which he or she was graduated;

16 (B) is a graduate of a public or independent postsecondary institution
17 in Vermont;

18 (C) was a first-time, full-time, degree-seeking student while enrolled
19 in the postsecondary institution;

20 (D) was awarded:

21 (i) an associate's degree in a science or an applied science major;

1 (ii) a bachelor's degree in a STEM major; or

2 (iii) a bachelor's degree in education with a concentration in a

3 STEM subject;

4 (E) completed the associate's degree within two years or the

5 bachelor's degree within four years;

6 (F) was enrolled in the postsecondary institution from which the

7 degree was awarded or was enrolled in both that institution and another

8 Vermont postsecondary institution for the entire two- or four-year period;

9 provided however, that an award shall be available on a prorated basis to an

10 otherwise eligible individual who is enrolled in a postsecondary institution

11 located outside of Vermont and who transfers to and is graduated from a

12 Vermont postsecondary institution; and

13 (G) is employed in a position following graduation that relies upon

14 the skills acquired in the individual's major, as determined by the Secretary of

15 Commerce and Community Development.

16 (3) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall

17 make an award under this section to an eligible individual:

18 (A) in an amount equal to one semester of tuition at the Vermont

19 State Colleges' in-state tuition rate for the second year of enrollment for an

20 individual awarded an associate's degree, to be paid in installments during the

21 three years following graduation; and

1 (B) in an amount equal to one year of tuition at the Vermont State
2 Colleges' in-state tuition rate for the fourth year of enrollment for an individual
3 awarded a bachelor's degree, to be paid in installments during the five years
4 following graduation.

5 (4) Notwithstanding subdivision (3) of this subsection, an award to an
6 eligible individual shall be adjusted so that it does not exceed the amount of
7 the individual's debt arising solely from postsecondary tuition that is
8 outstanding at the time of graduation.

9 (d) STEM majors. A "STEM major" shall mean all majors identified as a
10 STEM-Designated Degree Program by the U.S. Department of Homeland
11 Security together with any additional majors approved by the Secretary of
12 Commerce and Community Development by rule.

13 (e) Reports.

14 (1) Participating postsecondary schools shall report annually in
15 November to the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
16 regarding the number of enrolled first-time, full-time Vermont students with an
17 eligible major who are expected to graduate within the required two- or
18 four-year period.

19 (2) Notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), the Secretary of Commerce and
20 Community Development shall report annually in January to the General
21 Assembly regarding implementation of the Program, including the projected

1 cost of making awards under this section during the then-current fiscal year
2 and each of the four years following.

3 (f) Rules. The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall
4 adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to implement the Program created
5 by this section. To meet evolving workforce development needs and priorities,
6 the Secretary may from time to time adopt rules revising the academic majors
7 that are eligible for an award under this section.

8 Sec. 3. REPORTS

9 On or before January 15, 2014, the Secretary of Commerce and Community
10 Development shall report to the General Assembly regarding implementation
11 of the Program created in Sec. 2 of this act, including the projected cost of
12 making awards under that section in fiscal year 2016 and after.

13 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

14 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2013 and, pursuant to the terms of
15 16 V.S.A. § 2888, tuition repayment awards shall be available to Vermont
16 students graduating from high school in 2013 and after.