

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Appropriations to which was referred House Bill  
3 No. 790 entitled “An act relating to Reach Up eligibility” moves to amend the  
4 report of the Committee on Health and Welfare by striking out all after the  
5 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

6 \* \* \* Reach Up Asset Limit and Earned Income Counseling \* \* \*

7 Sec. 1. 33 V.S.A. § 1103 is amended to read:

8 § 1103. ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT LEVELS

9 (a) Financial assistance shall be given for the benefit of a dependent child  
10 to the relative or caretaker with whom the child is living unless otherwise  
11 provided. The amount of financial assistance to which an eligible person is  
12 entitled shall be determined with due regard to the income, resources, and  
13 maintenance available to that person and, as far as funds are available, shall  
14 provide that person a reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and  
15 health. The Commissioner may fix by regulation maximum amounts of  
16 financial assistance, and act to ~~insure~~ ensure that the expenditures for the  
17 programs shall not exceed appropriations for them consistent with section 101  
18 of this title. In no case may the Department expend State funds in excess of  
19 the appropriations for the programs under this chapter.

20 \* \* \*

1 (c) The Commissioner shall adopt rules for the determination of eligibility  
2 for the Reach Up program and benefit levels for all participating families that  
3 include the following provisions:

4 \* \* \*

5 (5) The value of assets accumulated from the earnings of adults and  
6 children in participating families and from any federal or Vermont earned  
7 income tax credit shall be excluded for purposes of determining continuing  
8 eligibility for the Reach Up program. The asset limitation shall be ~~increased~~  
9 ~~from \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00~~ \$5,000.00 for participating families for the  
10 purposes of determining continuing eligibility for the Reach Up program.

11 \* \* \*

12 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 1107(a) is amended to read:

13 (a)(1) The Commissioner shall provide all Reach Up services to  
14 participating families through a case management model informed by  
15 knowledge of the family's home, community, employment, and available  
16 resources. Services may be delivered in the district office, the family's home,  
17 or community in a way that facilitates progress toward accomplishment of the  
18 family development plan. Case management may be provided to other eligible  
19 families. The case manager, with the full involvement of the family, shall  
20 recommend, and the Commissioner shall modify as necessary a family  
21 development plan established under the Reach First or Reach Up program for

1 each participating family, with a right of appeal as provided by section 1132 of  
2 this title. A case manager shall be assigned to each participating family as  
3 soon as the family begins to receive financial assistance. If administratively  
4 feasible and appropriate, the case manager shall be the same case manager the  
5 family was assigned in the Reach First program. The applicant for or recipient  
6 of financial assistance, under this chapter, shall have the burden of  
7 demonstrating the existence of his or her condition.

8 (2) In addition to the services provided pursuant to subsection (b) of this  
9 section, the Commissioner shall provide for a mandatory case review for each  
10 participating family with a program director or the program director's designee  
11 when the family reaches 18 and 36 months of enrollment, respectively, in the  
12 Reach Up program to assess whether the participating family:

13 (A) is in compliance with a family development plan or work  
14 requirement;

15 (B) is properly claiming a deferment, if applicable; ~~and~~

16 (C) has any unaddressed barriers to self-sufficiency and, if so, how  
17 those barriers may be better addressed by the Department for Children and  
18 Families or other State programs; and

19 (D) has additional opportunities to achieve earned income through  
20 the program without a corresponding loss of benefits.

1           (3) The case manager shall meet with each participating family  
2           following any statutory or rule changes affecting the amount of the earned  
3           income disregard, asset limitations, or other eligibility or benefit criteria in the  
4           Reach Up program to inform the family of the changes and advise the family  
5           about ways to maximize the opportunities to achieve earned income without a  
6           corresponding loss of benefits.

7                           \* \* \* Enhanced Child Care Services Subsidy \* \* \*

8           Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. § 3512 is amended to read:

9           § 3512. CHILD CARE SERVICES ~~PROGRAM~~ PROGRAMS;

10                           ELIGIBILITY

11           (a)(1) A child care services program is established to subsidize, to the  
12           extent that funds permit, the costs of child care for families that need child care  
13           services in order to obtain employment, to retain employment or to obtain  
14           training leading to employment. Families seeking employment shall not be  
15           entitled to participate in the program for a period in excess of one month,  
16           unless that period is extended by the Commissioner.

17           ~~(b)~~(2) The subsidy authorized by this ~~section~~ subsection shall be on a  
18           sliding scale basis. The scale shall be established by the Commissioner, by  
19           rule, and shall bear a reasonable relationship to income and family size. The  
20           lower limit of the fee scale shall include families whose gross income is up to  
21           and including 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The upper income

1 limit of the fee scale shall be neither less than 200 percent of the federal  
2 poverty guidelines nor more than 100 percent of the ~~state~~ State median income,  
3 adjusted for the size of the family. The scale shall be structured so that it  
4 encourages employment.

5 (b)(1) An enhanced child care services subsidy program is established for  
6 families participating in the Reach Ahead program.

7 (2) The enhanced child care services subsidy program established by  
8 this subsection shall be administered by the Department's Child Development  
9 Division. The Commissioner shall adopt rules necessary for the administration  
10 of the program pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25.

11 (3) The subsidy authorized by this subsection shall be no greater than  
12 100 percent of the subsidy provided in subsection (a) of this section.

13 (4) A participating family shall remain eligible for the enhanced child  
14 care services subsidy program between 12 and 24 months as long as one or  
15 more dependent children of a working parent or parents are receiving child  
16 care services. The Commissioner for Children and Families may extend the  
17 subsidy beyond 24 months if the Commissioners for Children and Families and  
18 of Finance and Management determine jointly that an extension can be  
19 accommodated within appropriated resources.

20 (5) The enhanced child care services subsidy program shall be funded  
21 through savings resulting from caseload reductions in the Reach Up program.

1 If there are insufficient savings from caseload reductions to fund the program,  
2 the program shall be suspended or modified.

3 Sec. 4. INTERIM REPORT

4 The Department for Children and Families shall submit a written report to  
5 the Health Care Oversight Committee on or before November 1, 2014  
6 regarding the estimated cost of the enhanced child care services subsidy  
7 program and projected caseload reduction savings in the Reach Up program.

8 Sec. 5. BUDGET PRESENTATION

9 The Department for Children and Families shall include as part of its fiscal  
10 year 2016 budget presentation to the General Assembly a preliminary estimate  
11 of the projected Reach Up program cost reduction associated with caseload  
12 estimates below the level appropriated for fiscal year 2015, as well as the  
13 parameters and cost projections for the enhanced child care services subsidy  
14 established pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 3512(b).

15 \* \* \* Asset Limit and Child Care Services Subsidy Offset \* \* \*

16 Sec. 6. 33 V.S.A. § 1204 is amended to read:

17 § 1204. FOOD ASSISTANCE

18 (a)(1) An eligible family shall receive monthly food assistance equal to  
19 ~~\$100.00~~ \$50.00 to be applied to the family's electronic benefit transfer (EBT)  
20 food account for the first ~~six~~ 12 months after the family has become eligible  
21 for Reach Ahead.



1 continue to receive monthly food assistance equal to \$100.00 until its seventh  
2 month of participation in the program, at which time it shall receive monthly  
3 food assistance equal to \$50.00 for the remainder of the initial 12-month  
4 period.

5 \* \* \* Effective Dates \* \* \*

6 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATES

7 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2014, except that:

8 (1) Secs. 1, 6(a)(1), and 8 shall take effect on January 1, 2015; and

9 (2) Secs. 3, 6(a)(2) and (d), and 7 shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

10 and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating  
11 to Reach Up eligibility and benefit levels”.

12  
13  
14 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

15 \_\_\_\_\_

16 Senator \_\_\_\_\_

17 FOR THE COMMITTEE