

S.281

An act relating to the mitigation of systemic racism

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

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to promote racial justice reform throughout the State by mitigating systemic racism in all systems of State government and creating a culture of inclusiveness.

Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. § 2102 is amended to read:

§ 2102. POWERS AND DUTIES

(a) The Governor's Cabinet shall adopt and implement a program of continuing coordination and improvement of the activities carried on at all levels of State and local government.

(b) The Cabinet shall work collaboratively with the Executive Director of Racial Equity and shall provide the Director with access to all relevant records and information as permitted by law.

Sec. 3. 3 V.S.A. chapter 68 is added to read:

CHAPTER 68. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL EQUITY

§ 5001. POSITION

(a) There is created within the Executive Branch the position of Executive Director of Racial Equity to identify and work to eradicate systemic racism within State government.

(b) The Executive Director of Racial Equity shall have the powers and duties enumerated within section 2102 of this title and shall work collaboratively with and act as a liaison between the Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council, the Vermont Human Rights Commission, and the Governor's Cabinet.

(c) The Director shall be housed within and have the administrative, legal, and technical support of the Agency of Administration.

§ 5002. RACIAL EQUITY ADVISORY PANEL

(a) The Racial Equity Advisory Panel is established. The Panel shall be organized and have the duties and responsibilities as provided in this section. The Panel shall have the administrative, legal, and technical support of the Agency of Administration.

(b)(1) The Panel shall consist of five members, as follows:

(A) one member appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees who shall not be a current legislator;

(B) one member appointed by the Speaker of the House who shall not be a current legislator;

(C) one member appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who shall not be a current legislator;

(D) one member appointed by the Governor who shall not be a current legislator; and

(E) one member appointed by the Human Rights Commission who shall not be a current legislator.

(2) Members shall be drawn from diverse backgrounds to represent the interests of communities of color throughout the State, have experience working to implement racial justice reform and, to the extent possible, represent geographically diverse areas of the State.

(3) The term of each member shall be three years, except, so that the term of one regular member expires in each ensuing year of the members first appointed, one shall serve a term of: one year, to be appointed by the Human Rights Commission; two years, to be appointed by the Governor; three years, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; four years, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees; and five years, to be appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. As terms of currently serving members expire, appointments of successors shall be in accord with the provisions of this subsection. Appointments of members to fill vacancies or expired terms shall be made by the authority that made the initial appointment to the vacated or expired term. Members shall serve until their successors are elected or appointed. Members shall serve not more than three consecutive terms in any capacity.

(4) Members of the Panel shall elect by majority vote the Chair of the Panel, who shall serve for a term of three years after the implementation

period. Members of the Panel shall be appointed on or before September 1, 2018 in order to prepare as they deem necessary for the establishment of the Panel, including the election of the Chair of the Panel. Terms of members shall officially begin on January 1, 2019.

(c) The Panel shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

(1) work with the Executive Director of Racial Equity to implement the reforms identified as necessary in the comprehensive organizational review as required by subsection 5003(a) of this title; and

(2) oversee and advise the Executive Director to ensure ongoing compliance with the purpose of this chapter, and advise the Governor on strategies for remediating systemic racial disparities in statewide systems of government.

(d) Only the Panel may remove the Executive Director of Racial Equity. The Panel shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 25 of this title to define the basis and process for removal.

(e) Each member of the Panel shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

§ 5003. DUTIES OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL EQUITY

(a) The Executive Director of Racial Equity (Director) shall work with the agencies and departments to implement a program of continuing coordination and improvement of activities in State government in order to combat systemic

racial disparities and measure progress toward fair and impartial governance,

including:

(1) overseeing a comprehensive organizational review to identify systemic racism in each of the three branches of State government and inventory systems in place that engender racial disparities;

(2) managing and overseeing the statewide collection of race-based data to determine the nature and scope of racial discrimination within all systems of State government; and

(3) developing a model fairness and diversity policy and review and make recommendations regarding the fairness and diversity policies held by all State government systems.

(b) Pursuant to section 2102 of this title, work collaboratively with State agencies and departments to gather relevant existing data and records necessary to carry out the purpose of this chapter and to develop best practices for remediating systemic racial disparities throughout State government.

(c) The Director shall work with the agencies and departments and with the Chief Performance Officer to develop performance targets and performance measures for the General Assembly, the Judiciary, and the agencies and departments to evaluate respective results in improving systems. These performance measures shall be included in the agency's or department's quarterly reports to the Director, and the Director shall include each agency's

or department's performance targets and performance measures in his or her annual reports to the General Assembly.

(d) The Director shall, in consultation with the Department of Human Resources and the agencies and departments, develop and conduct trainings for agencies and departments regarding the nature and scope of systemic racism and the institutionalized nature of race-based bias. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to discharge the existing duty of the Department of Human Resources to conduct trainings.

(e) On or before January 15, 2020, and annually thereafter, the Director shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations demonstrating the State's progress in identifying and remediating systemic racial bias within State government.

§ 5004. INFORMATION; DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

(a) Confidentiality of records.

(1) Any records transmitted to or obtained by the Executive Director of Racial Equity and the Racial Equity Advisory Panel that are exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act shall remain exempt and shall be kept confidential to the extent required by law.

(2) Draft reports, working papers, and internal correspondence between the Director and the Panel shall be exempt from public inspection and copying

under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential. The completed reports shall be public records.

(b) Exceptions.

(1) The Director and Panel members may make records available to each other, the Governor, and the Governor's Cabinet as necessary to fulfill their duties as set forth in this chapter. They may also make records pertaining to any alleged violations of antidiscrimination statutes available to any State or federal law enforcement agency authorized to enforce such statutes.

(2) Absent a court order for good cause shown or the prior written consent of an individual providing information or lawfully-obtained records to the Director or the Panel, the Director and Panel Members may decline to disclose:

(A) the identity of the individual if good cause exists to protect his or her confidentiality; and

(B) materials pertaining to the individual, including written communications among the individual, the Director and the Panel, and recordings, notes, or summaries reflecting interviews or discussions among the individual, the Director and the Panel.

§ 5005. NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

(a) The Racial Equity Advisory Panel shall select for consideration by the Panel, by majority vote, provided that a quorum is present, from the

applications for the position of Executive Director of Racial Equity as many candidates as it deems qualified for the position.

(b) The Panel shall submit to the Governor the names of the candidates deemed most qualified to be appointed to fill the position.

(c) The Governor shall make the appointment to the Executive Director position from the list of qualified candidates submitted pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. The names of candidates submitted and not selected shall remain confidential.

Sec. 4. AUTHORIZATION FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL
EQUITY POSITION

One new permanent, exempt position of Executive Director of Racial Equity is created within the Agency of Administration.

Sec. 5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL EQUITY; RACIAL EQUITY
ADVISORY PANEL; FUNDING SOURCE; SURCHARGE;
REPEAL

(a) Surcharge.

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of 3 V.S.A. § 2283(c) setting forth the purpose and rate of charges collected in the Human Resource Services Internal Service Fund, in fiscal year 2019, a surcharge of up to 1.65 percent, and in fiscal year 2020 and thereafter, a surcharge of up to 3.3 percent, but not greater than the cost of both the Racial Equity Advisory Panel and the position

of Executive Director of Racial Equity set forth in Sec. 3 of this act, on the per-
position portion of the charges authorized in 3 V.S.A. § 2283(c)(2) shall be
assessed to all Executive Branch agencies, departments, and offices and shall
be paid by all assessed entities solely with State funds.

(2) The amount collected shall be accounted for within the Human
Resource Services Internal Service Fund and used solely for the purposes of
funding the Racial Equity Advisory Panel and the position of the Executive
Director of Racial Equity set forth in Sec. 3 of this act.

(b) Repeal. This section shall be repealed on June 30, 2024.

Sec. 6. FISCAL YEAR 2019 APPROPRIATION

There is appropriated to the Agency of Administration from the Human
Resource Services Internal Service Fund for fiscal year 2019 the amount of
\$75,000.00 for the Racial Equity Advisory Panel and the position of Executive
Director of Racial Equity.

Sec. 7. SECRETARY OF ADMINISTRATION; RACIAL EQUITY

ADVISORY PANEL; EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL
EQUITY; REPORT

(a) On or before September 1, 2018, the Racial Equity Advisory Panel shall
be appointed.

(b) On or before November 1, 2018, the Racial Equity Advisory Panel
shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Administration and with the

assistance and advice of the Department of Human Resources, have developed and posted a job description for the Executive Director of Racial Equity.

(c) On or before January 1, 2019, the Racial Equity Advisory Panel shall submit to the Governor the names of the candidates for the Executive Director of Racial Equity position.

(d) On or before February 1, 2019, the Governor shall appoint the Executive Director of Racial Equity.

(e) On or before May 1, 2019, the Executive Director of Racial Equity shall update the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations regarding how best to complete a comprehensive organizational review to identify systemic racism pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 5003, and potential private and public sources of funding to achieve the review.

Sec. 8. REPEAL

On June 30, 2024:

(1) Sec. 3 of this act (creating the Executive Director of Racial Equity and Racial Equity Advisory Panel in 3 V.S.A. chapter 68) is repealed and the Executive Director position and Panel shall cease to exist; and

(2) Sec. 4 of this act (authorization for the Executive Director of Racial Equity position) is repealed.

Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.