

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 Chief Civil Rights Officer and shall provide the Chief with access to all relevant records and information.

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

CHAPTER 68. CHIEF CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICER

§ 5001. POSITION

(a) There is created within the Executive Branch an independent position named the Chief Civil Rights Officer to identify and work to eradicate systemic racism within State government.

(b) The Chief Civil Rights Officer shall have the powers and duties enumerated within section 2102 of this title, but shall operate independently of the Governor's Cabinet.

(c) The Chief Civil Rights Officer shall not be attached to any State department or agency, but shall be housed within and have administrative, legal, and technical support of the Agency of Administration.

§ 5002. CIVIL RIGHTS ADVISORY PANEL

(a) The Civil Rights Advisory Panel is established. The Panel shall be organized and have the duties and responsibilities as provided in this section. The Panel may consult with the Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council, the Vermont Human Rights Commission, and others. The Panel shall have 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 senator;

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

(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 have experience working to implement racial justice reform and, to the extent possible, represent geographically diverse areas of the State. At least three members shall be persons of color.

(3) The term of each member shall be three years, except that of the members first appointed, one each 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, so that the term of one regular member expires in each ensuing year. 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.

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

(1) appoint the Chief Civil Rights Officer;

(2) work with the Chief Civil Rights Officer to implement the reforms identified as necessary in the comprehensive organizational review as required by section 5003(a) of this title;

(3) oversee and advise the Chief to ensure ongoing compliance with the purpose of this chapter; and

(4) on or before January 15, 2020, and annually thereafter, report to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations.

(d) Only the Panel may remove the Chief Civil Rights Officer. 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 CHIEF CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICER

(a) The Chief Civil Rights Officer 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) oversee 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, which may be completed by a consultant or outside vendor; and

(2) manage and oversee the statewide collection of race-based data to determine the nature and scope of racial discrimination within all systems of State government.

(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.

(c) The Chief 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 Chief, and the Chief 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 Chief shall, in consultation with the Department of Human Resources and the agencies and departments, develop and conduct trainings for agencies and departments. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to discharge the existing duty of the Department of Human Resources to conduct trainings.

(e) In order to enforce the provisions of this chapter and empower the Chief to perform his or her duties, the Chief may issue subpoenas, administer oaths and take the testimony of any person under oath, and require production of data, papers, and records. Any subpoena or notice to produce may be served by registered or certified mail or in person by an agent of the Chief. Service by registered or certified mail shall be effective three business days after mailing. Any subpoena or notice to produce shall provide at least six business days' time from service within which to comply, except that the Chief may shorten the time for compliance for good cause shown. Any subpoena or notice to produce sent by registered or certified mail, postage prepaid, shall constitute service on the person to whom it is addressed. Each witness who appears before the Chief under subpoena shall receive a fee and mileage as provided for witnesses in civil cases in Superior Courts; provided, however, any person subject to the Chief's authority shall not be eligible to receive fees or mileage under this section.

Sec. 4. AUTHORIZATION FOR CHIEF CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICER
POSITION

One new permanent, exempt position of Chief Civil Rights Officer is created within the Agency of Administration.

Sec. 4a. CHIEF CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICER; CIVIL RIGHTS 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 no greater than the cost of both the Civil Rights Advisory Panel and the position of Chief Civil Rights Officer 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 Civil Rights Advisory Panel and the position of the Chief Civil Rights Officer set forth in Sec. 3 of this act.

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

Sec. 5. FISCAL YEAR 2019 APPROPRIATION

There is appropriated to the Agency of Administration from the General Fund for fiscal year 2019 the amount of \$75,000.00 for the Civil Rights Advisory Panel and the position of Chief Civil Rights Officer.

Sec. 6. SECRETARY OF ADMINISTRATION; CIVIL RIGHTS

ADVISORY PANEL; CHIEF CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICER; REPORT

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

(b) On or before November 1, 2018, the Civil Rights Advisory Panel shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Administration and the Department of Human Resources, have developed and posted a job description for the Chief Civil Rights Officer.

(c) On or before January 1, 2019, the Civil Rights Advisory Panel shall appoint the Chief Civil Rights Officer.

(d) On or before April 1, 2019, the Chief Civil Rights Officer 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. 6a. REPEAL

On June 30, 2024:

(1) Sec. 3 of this act (creating the Chief Civil Rights Officer and Civil Rights Advisory Panel in 3 V.S.A. chapter 68) is repealed and the Officer position and Panel shall cease to exist; and

(2) Sec. 4 of this act (authorization for Chief Civil Rights Officer position) is repealed.

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.