

THOMAS J. DONOVAN, JR.
ATTORNEY GENERAL

JOSHUA R. DIAMOND
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

WILLIAM E. GRIFFIN
CHIEF ASST. ATTORNEY GENERAL



TEL: (802) 828-3171
TTY: (802) 828-3665
CIVIL RIGHTS: (802) 828-3657

www.ago.vermont.gov

**STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
109 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT
05609-1001**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 10, 2017

TO: Representative Maureen Dakin

FROM: William E. Griffin, Chief Assistant Attorney General
Diane Ford, Financial Administrator

SUBJECT: FY18 Additional General Fund Needs

Thank you for meeting with us to discuss additional our FY18 budget proposal and additional funding needed for FY18. Due to the transition in the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) and time constraints, these changes could not be entered into Vantage for inclusion as decision items in the FY18 budget proposal. As discussed, the AGO will request two items during testimony in the Appropriations Committees:

- \$80,000 This funding will support a small business advocate who will help Vermont small businesses comply with our consumer protection laws. This advocate will be assigned to the Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) housed on the University of Vermont (UVM) campus and will work with businesses throughout the state. The funding will pay for the costs of a position to be created by UVM. The position will be directly supervised by the AGO and paid under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the AGO and UVM.
- \$100,000 This funding will be used to support an Assistant Attorney General position to enforce Vermont's Civil Rights Laws. The need for the funding and position is especially acute given recent policy changes at the national level. Due to staffing and funding reductions several years ago, the Civil Rights Unit presently has just one lawyer to pursue claims investigated by support staff. A second lawyer would allow the AGO to double its efforts to pursue civil rights claims.

The AGO recommends an increase in general fund dollars to support these initiatives. The other option would be to increase the yearly AGO consumer settlement special fund appropriation above the current \$1,115,500 amount. The problem with the special fund option is that settlement recoveries may not consistently cover the appropriation in future years.

Thank you for your consideration.