

1 S.122

2 Representative Sibilias of Dover moves that the House propose to the Senate  
3 that bill be amended by adding a new section, to be Sec. XX, with reader  
4 assistance, to read:

5 \* \* \* Extraordinary Small School Grant Program \* \* \*

6 Sec. XX. ESTABLISHMENT OF EXTRAORDINARY SMALL SCHOOL  
7 GRANT PROGRAM

8 (a) Findings.

9 (1) Vermont's kindergarten through grade 12 student population has  
10 declined from 103,000 in fiscal year 1997 to [ ] in fiscal year 2017.

11 (2) Vermont recognizes the important role that a small school plays in  
12 the social and educational fabric of its community. However, rural school  
13 districts have found it particularly challenging to maintain their small schools  
14 and provide high quality education to their students because of the decline in  
15 Vermont's student population.

16 (3) The General Assembly has encouraged, through incentive programs  
17 established in 2010, 2012, and 2015, school districts to unify existing  
18 governance units into more "sustainable governance structures" designed to  
19 meet the General Assembly's identified educational and fiscal goals.

20 (4) Certain rural districts were early in recognizing their challenges and  
21 on their own initiative, and without receiving incentives from the State, formed

1 joint contract schools with other school districts. As a consequence, these  
2 districts received less in small school grant support than they would have  
3 received had they not formed a joint contract school.

4 (b) Goals. The goal of this section is to ensure that a school district that  
5 formed a joint contract school, received less in small school grant support than  
6 it would have received had it not formed a joint contract school, and that  
7 merges under 2010 Acts and Resolves No. 153, 2012 Acts and Resolves  
8 No. 156, or 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46, receives extraordinary small  
9 school grant funding to offset lost funding due to the formation of the joint  
10 contract school.

11 (c) Definitions. As used in this section:

12 (1) A “qualifying school district” means the following school districts:

13 (A) Bridgewater;

14 (B) Brookline;

15 (C) Newfane;

16 (D) Pomfret;

17 (E) Whitingham; and

18 (F) Wilmington.

19 (2) A “qualifying merger” means a new governance structure formed by  
20 the merger of a qualifying school district and another school district that  
21 becomes operational on or before December 1, 2017 under 2010 Acts and

1 Resolves No. 153, 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 156, or 2015 Acts and  
2 Resolves No. 46, each as amended.

3 (d) Extraordinary Small School Grant Program created. Notwithstanding  
4 any provision to the contrary of 16 V.S.A. § 4015, there is created the  
5 Extraordinary Small School Grant Program (Grant Program) for the purpose of  
6 providing supplemental education funding for qualifying school districts that  
7 shall be administrated and funded in accordance with this section.

8 (e) Administration. The Secretary of Education shall administer the Grant  
9 Program and shall award grants to qualifying school districts.

10 (f) One-Time Merger Grant. If a qualifying school district merges with  
11 another school district in a qualifying merger, the Secretary shall award a one-  
12 time merger grant under the Grant Program to the newly merged district within  
13 30 days following the qualifying merger. The amount of the grant shall equal  
14 the amount of small school support funding the qualifying school district  
15 would have received under 16 V.S.A. § 4015 had it not contracted to form a  
16 joint contract school for the period beginning on the date the qualifying school  
17 district contracted to form a joint contract school and ending on the date of the  
18 qualifying merger, minus the amount, if any, the district received in small  
19 school grants under 16 V.S.A. § 4015 during this period.

20 (g) Ongoing Merger Support Grant.

1           (1) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, if a qualifying  
2           school district merges with another school district in a qualifying merger, the  
3           Secretary shall award an annual merger support grant under the Grant Program  
4           to the newly merged district in an amount equal to the small school support  
5           grant the qualifying district received in the fiscal year immediately prior to the  
6           year in which the qualifying district formed a joint contract school. The  
7           amount of annual merger support grants for the qualifying districts (if a  
8           qualifying district merges in a qualifying merger) shall be:

9                   (A) Bridgewater: \$62,161.00

10                   (B) Brookline: \$53,672.00

11                   (C) Newfane: \$72,466.00

12                   (D) Pomfret: \$85,525.00

13                   (E) Whitingham: \$0.00

14                   (F) Wilmington: \$54,900.00

15           (2) If more than one qualifying district is part of a qualifying merger,  
16           then the merger support grant shall be in an amount equal to the total combined  
17           small school support grants each qualifying district received in the fiscal year  
18           immediately prior to the year in which the qualifying district formed a joint  
19           contract school.

20           (3) Payment of the grant under subdivision (1) of this subsection shall  
21           continue annually unless explicitly repealed by the General Assembly;

1 provided, however, that the Secretary shall discontinue payment of the grant in  
2 the fiscal year following closure of the joint contract school; and further  
3 provided that if a joint contract school building is closed in order to consolidate  
4 with another school into a renovated or new school building, then the Secretary  
5 shall continue to pay the grant during the repayment term of any bonded  
6 indebtedness incurred in connection with the consolidation-related renovation  
7 or construction.

8 (h) Funding. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary of 16 V.S.A.  
9 § 4025(d), the Grant Program shall be funded by appropriations from the  
10 Education Fund, which shall be paid to the Secretary of Education for  
11 administration under this section.

12 and to renumber the remaining section to be in numerically correct order