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MEMORANDUM

To: Representative Catherine Toll, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

From: Helen Head, Chair, House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs

Date: March 3, 2017

Subject: Provisions in Governor's Proposed FY 2018 Budget

It has come to the Committee's attention that its recommendation regarding the proposed additional funding for the National Guard Educational Assistance Program was inadvertently omitted from the Committee's prior memorandum regarding the Governor's Proposed FY 2018 Budget. Please find the corrected language below.

* * * National Guard Educational Assistance * * *

The Committee heard testimony regarding the proposed addition of \$500,000.00 to the National Guard Educational Assistance Program from Major General Steven Cray, Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard; Ken Gragg, Financial Director of the Military Department; Sergeant Major Gerald Marckres, Vermont National Guard Recruiting Command; Patricia Coates, Director of Government and External Affairs for the Vermont State Colleges; Pamela Chisolm, Dean of Enrollment Services of Community College of Vermont; Thomas Anderson, Associate Academic Dean of Lyndon State College; Dyllan Durham a student and Vermont National Guard member; Tom Little, Vice President and General Counsel of the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation; and Marilyn Cargill, Vice President of Financial Aid Services, Marketing and Research for the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation.

Based on the testimony that it heard, the Committee encourages the Vermont National Guard to work with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to seek potential cost savings in an effort to provide full-tuition assistance to Guard members enrolled in the current educational assistance program. The Committee is deeply concerned that full-tuition assistance offered by surrounding states is harming the Vermont National Guard's ability to recruit new members and presents an ongoing challenge to the Guard's ability to fulfill its mission. According to Major General Cray,

in 2016 the Guard was only able to recruit 173 new members in contrast to its goal of 300. Accordingly, while adequate funding does not presently exist for the proposal contained in H.72, the Committee is committed to working with the National Guard and VSAC to pursue enhanced tuition assistance for National Guard members and to ensure that the Guard is able to meet its recruiting needs in the future.

The Committee supports maintaining at least the current level of funding for the existing National Guard Educational Assistance Program. The Committee would like the National Guard Educational Assistance Program to become a priority. The Committee would support providing additional funding if and when the National Guard and VSAC are able to reach an agreement regarding the details of a full-tuition assistance program that can be adequately funded within the constraints of the State's budgetary realities.