

TO THE HONORABLE SENATE

The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred Senate Bill No. S. 162, entitled "An act relating to services for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind"

respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

The Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing closed in September 2014. Prior to its closing, the Center provided comprehensive and statewide educational, social, and support services to children, youth, and adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind. These services included the Austine School for the Deaf, which closed in June 2014; several regional classrooms; consultant services for mainstreamed students; a parent-infant program; a family mentoring program; adult services; and numerous other support options. While efforts are underway to replace at least some of the discontinued services, it remains unclear whether the educational, support, and service needs of children and other persons in the State who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind are currently being met. Over ten percent of Americans experience some degree of hearing loss, which represents over 70,000 Vermonters. It is the purpose of this act to establish the position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director to serve as a central coordinator and resource for members of the deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind community.

Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. chapter 16 is amended is read:

CHAPTER 16. ~~VERMONT SERVICES FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND OR DEAFBLIND ADVISORY COUNCIL~~

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§ 1603. DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLIND SERVICES DIRECTOR

The position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director is established within the Department for the purpose of coordinating services within the Agencies of Human Services and of Education for children, youth, and adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and for their families. The Director shall have the following responsibilities:

(1) creating and administering a referral network for services for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and for their families, including health, rehabilitative, education, employment, and interpreter services;

(2) coordinating with the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council to provide annual recommendations to the Governor, including identifying system strengths and gaps in services;

(3) creating and distributing outreach and educational materials about available resources in a manner that is accessible to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind;

(4) establishing effective and collaborative working relationships among the staff of the Agencies of Human Services and of Education, service providers, and community partners; and

(5) providing other coordination services that account for the differing needs and attitudes of members of the deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind community and their families.

### Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

The amount of \$89,347.00 is appropriated in State fiscal year 2019 for the purpose of establishing the position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 1603.

### Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

(Committee vote: 5-0-0)



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Senator White  
FOR THE COMMITTEE