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S.281

Introduced by Senators Hardy, Balint, Baruth, Bray, Champion, Clarkson,
Hooker, Ingram, McCormack, Perchlik, Pollina and Sirotkin
Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Libraries, history, and information technology; public libraries;

Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish the
Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont to report on the current
status of Vermont's libraries and recommend improvements to the public
library system.

An act relating to the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. WORKING GROUP ON THE STATUS OF LIBRARIES IN
VERMONT; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Working Group on the Status of
Libraries in Vermont to study and report on the statewide status of Vermont's
libraries. The Working Group is formed with the intent of strengthening and
supporting libraries of all sizes and improving library services for the public.

1 (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following
2 members:

3 (1) the State Librarian;

4 (2) the President of the Vermont Library Association or designee;

5 (3) the Executive Director of the Vermont Humanities Council or
6 designee;

7 (4) three representatives of public libraries, who shall be from libraries
8 of different sizes and from different regions of the State, appointed by the State
9 Librarian;

10 (5) two representatives of public school libraries, who shall be from
11 schools of different sizes and from different regions of the State, appointed by
12 the Secretary of Education;

13 (6) two representatives of college and university libraries appointed by
14 the President of the College and Special Libraries Section of the Vermont
15 Library Association; and

16 (7) one public library trustee appointed by the President of the Friends
17 and Trustees Section of the Vermont Library Association.

18 (c) Powers and Duties. The Working Group shall study:

19 (1) library services for specific segments of the Vermont population,
20 including senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, youth and children,
21 immigrant and migrant communities, and people living in poverty;

1 (2) the role that libraries play in emergency preparedness, cultural
2 diversity and inclusion, public health and safety, community identity and
3 resiliency, economic development, and access to public programs and services;
4 and

5 (3) the current overall status of Vermont libraries, including information
6 related to programming, collections, facilities, technology, and staffing.

7 (A) Programming. The Working Group shall study the types and
8 frequency of library programs, attendance at library programs, and whether
9 library programs are meeting community needs. The study of programming
10 may include an assessment of public engagement and outreach surrounding
11 library programming, as well as the opportunities for non-library programs and
12 groups to access Vermont libraries.

13 (B) Collections. The Working Group shall study the size and
14 diversity of library holdings and assess the strengths and gaps in materials
15 available to Vermonters. The study of collections may include an assessment
16 of how libraries may best share resources across differing libraries and
17 communities, whether libraries offer community-specific resources, and
18 whether libraries maintain special collections or historical artifacts.

19 (C) Facilities. The Working Group shall study whether library
20 facilities and buildings could be improved with regard to energy efficiency.

1 accessibility, flexibility, human health and safety, historic preservation, and
2 intergenerational needs.

3 (D) Technology. The Working Group shall study whether Vermont
4 libraries have sufficient access to basic technological resources, cyber-security
5 resources, high-speed Internet, electronic catalogs, interlibrary loan and other
6 interoperable systems, and appropriate hardware and software; and

7 (E) Staff. The Working Group shall study staffing levels at Vermont
8 libraries, whether staffing levels are sufficient to meet community needs,
9 whether library staff compensation and benefits are sufficient, how libraries
10 rely on volunteers, and what resources are available for workforce
11 development and training of library staff.

12 (d) Public Input. As part of the study and report, the Working Group shall
13 solicit feedback from the general public and library users around the State.
14 The Working Group may examine models for library management and
15 organization in other states.

16 (e) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,
17 technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Libraries. For purposes of
18 scheduling meetings and preparing recommended legislation, the Working
19 Group shall have the assistance of the Office of Legislative Council.

1 (f) Report. On or before November 1, 2021, the Working Group shall
2 submit a report to the House and Senate Committees on Education. The report
3 shall contain:

4 (1) specific and detailed findings and proposals concerning the issues set
5 forth in subsection (c) of this section;

6 (2) recommendations for updating the statutes, rules, standards, and the
7 governance structures of Vermont libraries to ensure equitable access for
8 Vermont residents, efficient use of resources, and quality in the provision of
9 services;

10 (3) recommendations related to the funding needs of Vermont libraries,
11 including capital, ongoing, and special funding, and an assessment of whether
12 there is a need for State aid and, if so, the amounts that may be distributed; and

13 (4) any other information or recommendations that the Working Group
14 may deem necessary.

15 (g) Meetings.

16 (1) The State Librarian shall be the Chair of the Working Group.

17 (2) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur
18 on or before August 1, 2020.

19 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

20 (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on December 1, 2021.

1 (h) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Working Group
2 shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as
3 permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 12 meetings. These
4 payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department of
5 Libraries.

6 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

7 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.