



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Kitty Toll, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Rep. Ann Pugh, Chair, House Committee on Human Services
Cc: Rep. Mitzi Johnson, Speaker, House of Representatives
Date: June 10, 2020
Subject: Recommendations Pertaining to the Use of Coronavirus Relief Funds

I. TIER 1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The House Committee on Human Services (Committee) proposes various Tier 1 investments of Vermont's Coronavirus Relief Funds aimed at stabilizing systems and services that support individuals and families made vulnerable by the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition to the proposed language and appropriations in Secs. A–L below, the Committee proposes that \$8.5 million of the \$50 million it has been requested to make recommendations on supplement the total amount recommended by the House Committee on Health Care for the Health Care Provider Stabilization Program for recovery centers, home health and hospice agencies, and designated and specialized services agency programs specific to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury. \$5 million is designated to the Health Care Provider Stabilization Program to support nursing homes. As of the date of writing, the General Assembly has not received a proposal from the administration for use of the Coronavirus Relief Funds beyond the Health Care Provider Stabilization Program.

The Committee also notes that \$2 million of its \$12 million appropriation to summer meals for children in Sec. F has been contributed from the \$5 million that the House Committee on Transportation was allocated to make recommendations on.

The Committee further notes that it has retained \$1 million of the \$50 million it has been requested to make recommendations on for unidentified needs related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

* * * Child Care and Family Supportive Services * * *

Sec. A. PARENT CHILD CENTER NETWORK; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;
APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$3,900,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Parent Child Center Network in fiscal year 2021 for the purpose of supporting parent child centers' response to an increased demand for services, such as supporting clients with housing and food insecurity, responding to child development inquiries, providing parental supports, and providing technology support and training.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary because the Parent Child Center Network serves many of Vermont's most vulnerable families. The increased demand for Parent Child Center Network services is due to or resulting from COVID-19 because this public health emergency has rendered the State's most vulnerable families even less secure in terms of food, housing, and parental and other educational supports.

Sec. B. CHILD CARE, SUMMER CAMP, AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

RESTART GRANTS; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$9,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of providing additional restart grants to summer camps, afterschool programs, and child care providers through the month of August. Of the sum appropriated, \$3,000,000.00 shall be designated for summer camps and afterschool programs and \$6,000,000.00 shall be designated for child care providers.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to ensure that summer camps, afterschool programs, and child care providers are able to conform to health and safety standards designed to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infections, such as altering staffing patterns, securing personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, and retrofitting facilities. This appropriation is also necessary to cover budgetary shortfalls resulting from the inability of a summer camp, afterschool program, or child care provider to open at full capacity, which is due to or resulting from COVID-19, because families are either unenrolling children to prevent transmission of the virus or summer camps, afterschool programs, and child care providers are reducing their capacity to conform with required health and safety standards.

Sec. C. CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED SERVICES; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division in fiscal year 2021 for purpose of addressing immediate needs related to providing Children's Integrated Services, including information technology training and the provision of equipment needed for telehealth services.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to provide remote services and is due to or resulting from COVID-19 because the risk of infection has limited the provision of in-person Children's Integrated Services.

Sec. D. INFANT SUPPLIES; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$50,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department for Children and Families for distribution to Junior League Diaper Bank in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of providing supplies to families facing economic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary because many families with infants and young children are in need of diapering and other supplies, which is due to or resulting from COVID-19, because the pandemic has created economic hardships for many families, including loss of employment, which renders them unable to procure these supplies.

* * * Addressing Food Insecurity * * *

Sec. E. CHARITABLE FOOD SYSTEM; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;
APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$4,600,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Health for distribution to the Vermont Foodbank in fiscal year 2021 for purpose of addressing food insecurity throughout the State, including purchasing more food, providing subgrants to partner food shelves and meal sites, and for additional personnel, supplies, materials, warehouse space, delivery services, and equipment to meet the increased need of Vermonters for access to food caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary because the Vermont

Foodbank has experienced a 46 percent increase in demand for services, which is due to or resulting from high unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption during the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition, the Vermont Foodbank will also incur significant expenses to access the food assistance funds available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, especially if the availability of the Vermont National Guard to support food distribution changes, because the Vermont Foodbank does not currently have the resources needed to independently manage food distributions on their own.

Sec. F. SUMMER MEALS TO CHILDREN; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$12,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Agency of Education for distribution to Summer Meal Sponsors in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of continuing meal delivery services to children during the months of June, July, and August.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to provide meal delivery services to children, including the preparation, packaging, and delivery of meals, and is due to or resulting from COVID-19 because food insecurity has increased significantly during the pandemic and settings otherwise available to provide meals during the summer months may not be available. This appropriation shall assist in the payment of costs incurred by Sponsors to address one or both of the following:

(1) compliance with COVID-19 public health precautions; or

(2) accommodation of increased participation in the Program due to the increase in number of eligible participants due to the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(c)(1) The Agency of Education shall continue to seek waivers from U.S. Department of Agriculture for the Summer Food Service Program to enable the State to draw down federal funds for the delivery of meals in accordance with this section.

(2) The provision of summer meals to children is not compensable under this section if the same costs or expenses have been or will be covered by federal grant.

Sec. G. FOOD DISTRIBUTION TO OLDER VERMONTERS AND OTHER

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living for distribution to the Area Agencies on Aging in fiscal year 2021 for the purpose of for providing nutrition services to older Vermonters or other vulnerable populations in compliance with public health or social distancing requirements implemented in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to address the increased demand for nutrition services and the added costs of public health precautions incurred by the Area Agencies on Aging due to or resulting from COVID-19 because the public health emergency increased food insecurity in Vermont and restricted congregate settings in which many older Vermonters and other vulnerable populations are typically served.

* * * Adult Day Programs * * *

Sec. H. ADULT DAY PROGRAMS; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a)(1) The sum of \$3,300,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living for distribution to adult day programs in fiscal year 2021 for purpose of providing sustainability payments during the months of July, August, and September to ensure that adult day programs remain viable and able to reopen once the risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate settings dissipates.

(2) In accepting the funds set forth in this section, an adult day program agrees to provide services for not less than one calendar year from the date of reopening.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to provide financial stability to Vermont's adult day programs while clients remain socially distanced to prevent the risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate settings and to ensure that programs are able to reopen once the risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate settings dissipates.

* * * Supports for New Americans, Refugees, and Immigrants * * *

Sec. I. SUPPORTS FOR NEW AMERICANS, REFUGEES, AND IMMIGRANTS;

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Agency of Human Services for distribution in equal amounts to the Association of Africans Living in Vermont and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants'

Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program in fiscal year 2021 for various purposes related to COVID-19, including:

(1) hiring outreach staff to communicate health and hygiene information related to COVID-19 in many languages, including the of symptoms of COVID-19, how to access health care, and the importance of social distancing;

(2) preparing and delivering care packages of food, clothing, and cleaning and hygiene products to persons experiencing economic hardship as a result of high unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic;

(3) providing navigation of case management services to clients in need of unemployment insurance, Reach Up, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and other benefits as a result of high unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

(4) hiring a coach to collaborate with the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division to assist New Americans interested in becoming a registered family child care provider.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary because many members of Vermont's New American, refugee, and immigrant population have been unable to access information related to:

(1) the prevention of COVID-19 transmission; and

(2) support services for persons experiencing either symptoms of the virus or financial hardship as a result of high unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

* * * Peer Supports for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities * * *

Sec. J. PEER SUPPORTS FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES;
CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$50,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department for Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living for distribution to the Green Mountain Self Advocates in fiscal year 2021 for the purposes of providing peer outreach services to persons with intellectual disabilities regarding:

(1) health and hygiene precautions related to avoiding exposure to and transmission of COVID-19;

(2) resources and services for persons impacted by financial hardship as a result of high unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

(3) training, assistance, and acquisition of digital equipment to access the supports in subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to ensure that persons with intellectual disabilities understand how to:

(1) reduce the risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19; and

(2) access health, social, and financial supports necessitated as a result of infection from COVID-19, social distancing, or financial hardship as a result of the high

unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic.

* * * Supplemental Reach Up Assistance * * *

Sec. K. SUPPLEMENTAL REACH UP ASSISTANCE; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF
FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$1,100,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department for Children and Families' Economic Services Division in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of providing small supplemental grants to families in the Reach Up program experiencing extraordinary financial hardship due to the COVID-19 public health emergency for expenses such as:

(1) cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment to prevent infection by of transmission of COVID-19;

(2) cash assistance to families with children under six years of age, which is linked to better health outcomes for young children;

(3) expenses related to remote learning or employment, including access to Internet; and

(4) transportation-related expenses to offset limited public transportation options during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary because Vermont's most vulnerable families, many of whom are Reach Up participants, have been especially susceptible to financial hardship as a result of the high unemployment rates, business closure, or significant business interruption due to the COVID-19 public health

emergency and require supplemental funds to provide COVID-19-related resources for their families.

* * * Microbusiness Recovery Program* * *

Sec. L. MICROBUSINESS RECOVERY PROGRAM; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF
FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for distribution to the community action agencies in fiscal year 2021 for the purposes of providing technical assistance and recovery grants to businesses with fewer than five employees and with income of 80 percent of the State median income or lower.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to stabilize low-income microbusinesses facing financial hardship as a result of business closures or significant business interruption due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Monies set aside specifically for low-income microbusinesses are necessary as these businesses may not be able to meet criteria for other microbusiness grant programs.

II. TIER 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee makes the following recommendations regarding Tier 2 investments:

- \$10 million+ to further supplement the Health Care Provider Stabilization Program with regard to recovery centers, home health and hospice agencies, and designated and specialized services agency programs specific to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury
- \$5 million to further supplement the Health Care Provider Stabilization Program with regard to nursing homes

- \$1 million to assist new child care providers to enter the field and expand capacity where many existing providers have had to limit their capacity to comply with COVID-19 health and safety guidance; the Committee notes that providers will need assistance past Dec. 30 to remain viable
- \$700,000.00 for the Microbusiness Recovery Program as outlined in Sec. L above