

Proposal for COVID-19 Fair Jobs and Recovery Plan

June 8, 2020

Dear Chair Marcotte & committee

We write to begin a conversation and work with you to ensure that any legislation providing economic stimulus and recovery to Vermont businesses includes consideration of the working Vermonters that will be needed to make these businesses successful. We have put together the attached list of worker-friendly proposals for your consideration, and we are open to other ideas that you or others may have.

We appreciate and support the need to get this money into the economy quickly. As resources flow to businesses, we must ensure that they use this money to encourage reintegration of Vermonters into the workforce. If we want to build a resilient, thriving Vermont, we want workers to turn these dollars back into the economy, where they can continue circulating.

There are a variety of ways to accomplish this shared goal and we look forward to working with you to achieve important worker-focused policy objectives.

Sincerely,

Representative Mary Howard (Working Vermonters caucus co-chair)

Representative Joey Donovan (Working Vermonters caucus co-chair)

Representative Brian Cina (Working Vermonters caucus co-chair)

Representative Mollie Burke (Women's Caucus co-chair)

Representative Jean O'Sullivan (Women's Caucus co-chair)

Representative Caleb Elder

Representative Sara Coffey

Representative Emilie Kornheiser

Senator Cheryl Hooker

Representative Selene Colburn

Representative Peter Anthony

Representative Theresa Wood

Representative Jim Masland

Representative Becca White

Representative Mary Sullivan

Representative Barbara Rachelson

Representative Diana Gonzalez

Senator Andy Perchlik

Representative John Killacky

Representative Zach Ralph

Senators Anthony Pollina

Representative Bob Hooper

Representative Mari Cordes

Representative Marybeth Redmond

Representative Stephanie Jerome

Representative Robin Scheu

Representative Kevin "Coach" Christie

Representative Chip Troiano

Representative Robin Chestnut-Tangerman

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Intent:

The proposed legislation will direct resources to Vermont businesses that have been hit hard by economic shutdown, while ensuring that relief funds serve as incentives for decent working conditions and benefits for the workers who keep our economy running, and the families they support. As we “rescue Main Street,” we need to ensure that those who live and work there are benefiting from our actions. At a time when we are celebrating the importance of workers, our policies must reflect these values.

Gender Equity:

Data consistently shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionate impacts on women and other marginalized people. Women are overrepresented among essential workers, in professions such as early childhood education, nursing, and health care. Many women are employed as part-time workers, tipped workers, or self-employed business owners, and are impacted significantly by shut-downs. Before COVID-19, women experienced higher rates of poverty, were more likely to work in lower-paying occupations, and experienced increased need for public assistance. The current crisis has widened these inequities and accelerated women’s risks of falling into poverty, along with those with other marginalized identities.

Women often play the role of primary caregivers in their families and spend more time on childcare, home schooling/education, housework, and health care. This legislation recognizes the value of caregiving, both inside and outside the home and acknowledges the necessity of rebuilding systems in ways that address inequities and make our economy stronger than before.

Proposal for economic stimulus eligibility:

Any businesses receiving assistance in the form of a proposed Vermont Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Grant program or through a similarly enacted program shall:

- 1) Apply the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive program’s qualifying job and wage threshold application criteria (32 V.S.A. 3330-3342). See <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/DED/VEPC/VEGI/QualifyingJobandWageThreshold.pdf>
- 2) Certify Compliance with Equal pay laws
 - a) <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/21/005/00495> and https://women.vermont.gov/sites/women/files/pdf/Equal_Pay_Brochure.pdf

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- 3) Accommodate Flexible and Reliable Schedules¹
 - a) <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2018/Docs/BILLS/H-0812/H-0812%20As%20Introduced.pdf>
- 4) Provide equitable CEO-worker pay ratios; the business's CEOs and/or highest paid workers shall not earn salaries more than ten times that of the lowest paid worker* in the organization.²
- 5) Follow a "Just Cause" requirement for termination.
 - a) <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/BILLS/H-0851/H-0851%20As%20Introduced.pdf> and
- 6) Practice neutrality with regards to union organizing
 - a) <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/BILLS/H-0700/H-0700%20As%20Introduced.pdf>

¹ For more on the value of these accommodations, see Julia Wolfe, Janelle Jones, and David Cooper, "Fair Workweek' Laws Help More Than 1.8 Million People," Economic Policy Institute, July 19, 2018, <https://www.epi.org/publication/fair-workweek-laws-help-more-than-1-8-million-workers/>.

² See Sarah Anderson and Sam Pizzagati, "The CEO-Worker Pay Gap," Institute for Policy Studies, February 2019, <https://inequality.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CEO-worker-pay-ratio-policy-brief-updated-Feb-2019.pdf>.