Introduced by Committee on Judiciary

Date:

Subject: Coronavirus Relief Fund; House Judiciary Committee

Recommendations

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes recommendations for appropriations from the Coronavirus Relief Fund for judiciary-related issues.

An act relating to Coronavirus Relief Fund appropriations for judiciary-related issues

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

Sec. 1. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of $130,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Corrections in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of remote operations of the Vermont Network’s Domestic Violence Accountability Programs.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section:
(Draft No. 2.1 – H.XXX)  
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(1) is necessary because Domestic Violence Accountability Programs

are a crucial element in the treatment of domestic violence offenders to reduce

their likelihood of committing future offenses; and

(2) is due to COVID-19 because the pandemic has required these

treatment groups to immediately transition to remote operations without any

funding to support the process.

Sec. 2. INCARCERATED AND REENTERING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC

AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of $197,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief

Fund to the Department of Corrections in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of

supporting incarcerated and reentering victims of domestic and sexual

violence.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from

the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section:

(1) is necessary because community support services are an integral part

of recovery for victims of domestic and sexual violence; and

(2) is due to from COVID-19 because during the pandemic the

Department of Corrections has been forced to isolate some incarcerated

individuals and limit the in-person contacts of offenders reentering the

community, resulting in a reduced access to support services that can be
ameliorated by establishing remote contact systems and more extensive use of
support personnel.

Sec.3. LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC AND
SEXUAL VIOLENCE; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of $80,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief
Fund to the Vermont Center for Crime Victim’s Services in fiscal year 2021
for purposes of providing no cost legal representation to victims of domestic
and sexual violence through the Vermont Network’s Justice for Victims Legal
Clinic.

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

(1) is necessary because victims of domestic and sexual violence must
participate in court proceedings in order for justice to be served; and

(2) is due to COVID-19 because the pandemic has made it more difficult
for victims to find attorneys and understand how they may participate remotely
in judicial proceedings.

Sec. 4. FORENSIC NURSING PROGRAM REMOTE ACCESS BY
VICTIM’S ADVOCATES; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of $160,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief
Fund to the Vermont Center for Crime Victim’s Services in fiscal year 2021
for purposes of providing victim’s advocates with remote access to the
Forensic Nursing Program.

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

(1) is necessary because the presence of victim’s advocates during
forensic examinations of sexual violence victims is necessary for their
recovery; and

(2) is due to COVID-19 because victim’s advocates are restricted by
hospitals from being physically present with victims during the pandemic as an
infection control strategy.

Sec. 5. DIVISION OF RACIAL EQUITY; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;
APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of $500,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief
Fund to the Agency of Administration Division of Racial Equity in fiscal year
2021 for purposes of increasing supports to people of color in light of data
indicating that they are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

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

(1) is necessary because people of color are more vulnerable to poor
COVID-19 health outcomes due to such factors as income inequality, wealth
disparity, access to safe housing and transportation, incarceration rates, and
criminal justice policies; and
(2) is due to COVID-19 because reliable data clearly indicates that the pandemic disproportionally impacts people of color.

Sec. 6. OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL’S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION PROJECT; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of $30,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Office of the Attorney General in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of the Office’s Strategic Plan for Equity and Inclusion project.

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

(1) is necessary because race-based disparities and implicit bias continue to persist throughout the State of Vermont; and

(2) is due to COVID-19 because the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on people of color has exacerbated the impact of existing race-based disparities and implicit bias so severely that immediate action is necessary.

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.