

H.965

An act relating to health care- and human services-related appropriations from the Coronavirus Relief Fund

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

* * * Purpose * * *

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this act is to appropriate \$300,000,000.00 from the Coronavirus Relief Fund for health care- and human services-related expenses incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

* * * Coronavirus Relief Fund; Administrative Provisions * * *

Sec. 2. CONSISTENCY WITH CARES ACT AND GUIDANCE

The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this act complies with the requirements of Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 and related guidance because the costs to be covered:

- (1) are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19);
- (2) were not accounted for in Vermont's fiscal year 2020 budget; and
- (3) were, or will be, incurred during the period beginning on March 1, 2020 and ending on December 30, 2020.

Sec. 3. GRANT RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS; REVERSION AND
REALLOCATION SCHEDULE

All appropriations made from the State's Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) in this and other bills passed after March 1, 2020 as part of the 2020 legislative session are made with the knowledge that the statutory and regulatory context is constantly changing. Additional federal legislation may further change the potential for and appropriateness of CRF usage. As a result:

(1) Appropriations from the CRF are subject to changes in source of funds that may occur as the result of subsequent legislation or through administrative actions, where permissible by law.

(2) Specific CRF uses may need to change based on changes to federal laws or on revised or updated federal guidance.

(3) It is the responsibility of all entities receiving CRF monies to ensure compliance with all federal guidelines as to CRF spending and use.

(4) Unless otherwise authorized by the Commissioner of Finance and Management, any monies appropriated from the CRF shall revert to the CRF to the extent that they have not been expended by December 20, 2020 to enable reallocation.

Sec. 4. CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND GRANTS; CONDITIONS

(a) Any person receiving a grant comprising monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund shall use the monies only for purposes that comply with the requirements of Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 and related guidance.

(b) Any person who expends monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund for purposes not eligible under Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 and related guidance shall be liable for repayment of the funds to the State of Vermont; provided, however, that a person shall not be liable for such repayment if the person expended the monies in good faith reliance on authorization of the proposed expenditure by or specific guidance from the agency or department administering the grant program.

(c) The Attorney General or a State agency or department administering a grant program established or authorized under this act may seek appropriate criminal or civil penalties as authorized by law for a violation of the terms or conditions of the applicable program, grant, or award.

Sec. 5. CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; RECORD KEEPING;

COMPLIANCE; REPORTS

(a) In order to ensure compliance with the requirements of Sec. 5001 of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136, and related guidance, and to assist the State in demonstrating such compliance:

(1) any agency or department, and any subrecipient of a grant, that is authorized to disburse grant funds appropriated by this act shall include standard audit provisions, as required by Agency of Administration Bulletins 3.5 and 5, in all contracts, loans, and grant agreements; and

(2) each grant recipient shall report on its use of the monies received pursuant to this act to the agency or department administering the grant as required by that agency or department and shall maintain records of its expenditures of the monies for three years, or for a longer period if so required by State or federal law, to enable verification as needed.

(b) On or before July 31, 2020 and September 1, 2020, each agency or department administering a grant program pursuant to this act shall provide information to the legislative committees of jurisdiction, including the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, regarding its distribution of grant funds to date, the amount of grant funds that remains available for distribution, and its plans for awarding the available funds by December 20, 2020.

* * * Health Care Provider Stabilization Program * * *

Sec. 6. HEALTH CARE PROVIDER STABILIZATION PROGRAM;

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$250,570,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Agency of Human Services in fiscal year 2021 for purposes

of establishing the Health Care Provider Stabilization Grant Program as set forth in this section.

(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 health care providers based on their COVID-19-related costs and the fiscal impacts of disruptions to their business operations as a result of COVID-19. Health care providers have had to change their care delivery models, suspend elective procedures and surgeries, reduce patient volume, acquire additional equipment and supplies, and make other modifications to their practices in order to respond to and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(c)(1) The Agency of Human Services shall establish the Health Care Provider Stabilization Grant Program to disburse the funds appropriated in this section to eligible health care provider applicants as expeditiously as possible using a needs-based application process.

(2) Based on federal law and guidance, the Agency shall establish guidelines identifying the specific types of costs for which grant recipients may use grant funds. Costs are not compensable under this section if the same costs or expenses have been or will be covered by insurance or by another State or federal grant; provided, however, that this restriction does not include loans or advance payments for which repayment is expected.

(3)(A) Providers of health care services in the following categories shall be eligible to apply for grant funds pursuant to this section if the provider is located in Vermont and delivers health care services in this State:

(i) hospitals, including community hospitals and psychiatric hospitals;

(ii) health care professional services, including independent medical practices, hospital-owned medical practices, designated and specialized services agencies, federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and laboratory and imaging centers;

(iii) dental services;

(iv) other professional services, including mental health providers, residential and nonresidential substance use disorder treatment providers, advanced practice registered nurses, physical therapists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, and other health care providers;

(v) home health and hospice agencies;

(vi) pharmacy services;

(vii) facility- and community-based long-term care services, including skilled nursing facilities, nursing homes, residential care homes, assisted living facilities, and adult day service providers; and

(viii) organizations recognized by the Agency of Human Services through their status as provider grant recipients providing health support

services, including the area agencies on aging and organizations providing peer support services.

(B) The Agency of Human Services shall evaluate applicants based on their demonstrated need and ability to meet the criteria set forth in subsection (d) of this section, not on the basis of a provider applicant's size or its proportion of health care spending in this State, and shall consider the impact of the requested funds on the applicant's sustainability.

(d) In determining whether and how much to award an applicant from the Health Care Provider Stabilization Grant Program, the Agency shall consider the applicant's demonstrated need and the extent to which the applicant meets some or all of the following criteria, to the extent applicable:

(1) The applicant would use the grant funds to sustain or improve the quality of health care services, including essential community services and services delivered using telehealth, provided during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(2) The applicant would use the grant funds to prepare for mitigating or responding to anticipated surges in COVID-19 cases or to prepare to meet increased needs for specific types of services, such as the likely demand for mental health services as a result of prolonged social isolation and economic stress due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(3) The applicant would use the grant funds to provide or support services that would otherwise likely become limited or unavailable as a result of business disruptions caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency, or the grant funds would enable the applicant to withstand and recover from business disruptions caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency, or both.

(4) The applicant would use the grant funds to supplement existing patient financial assistance programs in order to assist patients whose financial situations have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency or to enable the applicant to continue providing services to Medicaid beneficiaries, or both.

(5) The applicant appears capable of making appropriate and efficient use of the grant funds.

(e)(1)(A) The Agency shall provide notice and outreach regarding the availability of the grants and grant applications to health care providers and provider organizations in a timely manner.

(B) The information the Agency requires a provider to provide in an application for the Health Care Provider Stabilization Grant Program should not exceed the minimum necessary to demonstrate the applicant's need for the grant funds requested and the degree to which the provider satisfies some or all of the criteria in subsection (d) of this section, to the extent applicable.

(C) The Agency shall consider each application received and shall prioritize applications and the amount of each grant award based on the applicant's level of financial need and on the extent to which the applicant satisfies some or all of the criteria set forth in subsection (d) of this section, to the extent applicable.

(2) Grants to be awarded pursuant to this section may be requested and disbursed as a single payment or as multiple payments, depending on the needs of the applicant and the proposed uses of the funds, provided that all funds shall be disbursed, and cover costs incurred, on or before December 30, 2020 as required by the CARES Act.

(3) Notwithstanding any provision of this section to the contrary, of the funds appropriated pursuant to subsection (a) of this section:

(A) at least \$5,000,000.00 in grant funds shall be awarded to nursing homes; and

(B) at least \$8,500,000.00 in grant funds shall be awarded and divided between residential and nonresidential substance use disorder treatment programs, home health and hospice agencies, and designated and specialized services agency programs specific to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injuries.

(f)(1) On or before July 31, 2020, the Agency of Human Services shall provide information to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health

Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare regarding its distribution of Health Care Provider Stabilization Program grant funds to date, including the types of providers awarded funds, the aggregate amounts awarded by provider type, and the aggregate amounts awarded by geographic region of the State.

(2) On or before September 1, 2020, the Agency of Human Services shall provide information to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare regarding its distribution of Health Care Provider Stabilization Program grant funds since those included in the report required in subdivision (1) of this subsection, including the types of providers awarded funds, the aggregate amounts awarded by provider type, and the aggregate amounts awarded by geographic region of the State, and any amounts remaining for allocation.

(3) On or before January 15, 2021, the Agency of Human Services shall report to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare the specific grant amount or amounts awarded to each recipient of funds under the Health Care Provider Stabilization Program.

* * * Community Health Investments * * *

Sec. 7. COMMUNITY HEALTH INVESTMENTS; CORONAVIRUS

RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$9,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Agency of Human Services in fiscal year 2021 in order to sustain existing population health management programs.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to promote the health of Vermonters, including identifying patients most at risk from COVID-19, providing outreach and education regarding prevention of and testing for COVID-19, expanding access to telehealth, and maintaining care management programs to help patients manage chronic conditions while access to health care services is limited as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

* * * COVID-19-Related Health Disparities * * *

Sec. 8. ADDRESSING HEALTH DISPARITIES; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF
FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to Department of Health in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of addressing health disparities in Vermont as they relate to COVID-19 by providing direct

services to affected populations and conducting outreach to isolated individuals at high risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary to reduce health disparities that disproportionately affect individuals who belong to or identify with certain social categories by providing all Vermont residents with an equal opportunity to be healthy and to protect themselves and others from COVID-19.

(c)(1) The Department of Health shall use the funds appropriated in this section to provide up to 10 grants to community agencies to provide direct services to populations most likely to experience adverse outcomes from COVID-19 based on factors such as race or ethnicity, immigrant status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, and geographic location. Grantees shall work directly with affected populations and conduct outreach to isolated individuals at high risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19 to assess and identify their needs during the COVID-19 public health emergency in order to help them protect themselves and others from the disease, such as by providing education and resources regarding prevention of COVID-19 in languages and formats appropriate to the population, assisting with access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, and identifying and addressing difficulties in safely

meeting essential needs, including food, shelter, health care, and emotional support, during the public health emergency.

(2) The Department shall select grantees based on prior demonstrated work with the affected population, membership as part of the affected population, and ability to rapidly implement programming in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(d)(1) The grantees under the program established in this section shall provide insights gathered from their work under the grant, and recommendations for further actions based on those insights, to the Department to inform the Department's future efforts to address health disparities in Vermont.

(2) The Department of Health shall use the insights and recommendations provided by the grantees, along with the recommendations from the Governor's Racial Equity Task Force expected on or before August 15, 2020, to enhance and expand upon the Department's previous work in addressing health disparities in Vermont and shall consider ways to continue involving members of the affected populations in the Department's health equity planning processes and action plans going forward.

* * * Mental Health Services * * *

Sec. 9. SUICIDE PREVENTION; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$800,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of implementing suicide prevention initiatives focused on individuals at heightened risk of death by suicide due to economic stress, social isolation, or other impacts of 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 mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 on Vermonters' mental health as economic stress, social isolation, and other impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency have increased many individuals' feelings of panic, fear, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and other mental health concerns.

Sec. 10. PEER WARM LINE; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$200,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 for purposes of a grant to Pathways Vermont to operate its peer warm line 24 hours per day, seven days per week until December 30, 2020 and to conduct outreach to

health care providers and others across Vermont to make them aware of the warm line and encourage them to use it.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary because call volume to Pathways Vermont's warm line has increased substantially as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, including significantly increased numbers of calls regarding suicidality; the warm line provides an essential service to Vermonters on which their mental health and, in some cases, their lives may depend; and currently, Pathways only has sufficient funds to continuing operating the warm line 24 hours per day, seven days per week through June 30, 2020. In addition, responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency has taken an enormous toll on the mental health of health care providers across the State, and it is vital that they be aware of the support available to them through the warm line.

(c) Pathways Vermont shall use the funds received pursuant to this section to:

(1) operate its warm line 24 hours per day, seven days per week, until December 30, 2020;

(2) conduct outreach to health care providers across provider types in all geographic regions of the Vermont to make them aware of the warm line and

of existing hotline options in Vermont and encourage them to use those resources; and

(3) conduct outreach to Vermonters all across the State to make them aware of the warm line and of existing hotline options in Vermont and encourage them to use those resources.

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

Sec. 11. 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 Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division in fiscal year 2021 for distribution to the Parent Child Center Network 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; and providing parental supports, technology support and training, and other supplies and services to meet families' immediate needs.

(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, and the COVID-19 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. 12. 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. 13. 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 purposes of addressing immediate needs related to providing Children's Integrated Services, including information technology training and the provision of equipment necessary 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 because the risk of COVID-19 infection has limited the provision of in-person Children's Integrated Services.

Sec. 14. 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 in fiscal year 2021 for distribution to the Junior League of Champlain Valley Diaper Bank for

purposes of providing supplies to families statewide who are 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 and the COVID-19 pandemic has created economic hardships for many families, including loss of employment, that render them unable to procure these supplies.

* * * Addressing Food Insecurity * * *

Sec. 15. 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 in fiscal year 2021 for distribution to the Vermont Foodbank 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 as a result of 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 resulting from high unemployment rates, business closures, and significant business interruptions 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 its own.

Sec. 16. 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. Food insecurity has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and settings that often provide meals during summer months, like congregate settings, may not be available in the summer of 2020

due to public health considerations. 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 the 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 to the extent that the same costs or expenses have been or will be covered by other federal grant funds.

Sec. 17. 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 in fiscal year 2021 for distribution to the Area Agencies on Aging for the purpose of providing nutrition services to older Vermonters and 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 has increased food insecurity in Vermont and has restricted the availability of congregate settings in which many older Vermonters and other vulnerable populations are typically served.

* * * Adult Day Programs * * *

Sec. 18. ADULT DAY PROGRAMS; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;
APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$850,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living in fiscal year 2021 to provide sustainability payments to adult day programs during the months of July, August, and September to ensure that these programs remain viable and will be able to reopen once the risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate settings dissipates.

(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. 19. 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 in fiscal year 2021 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 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 registered family child care providers, including gaining a better understanding of the challenges facing New Americans in accessing child care as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and providing a career path for New Americans who have lost employment as a result of COVID-19.

(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 populations 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. 20. 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 in fiscal year 2021 for distribution to the Green Mountain Self Advocates 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 described 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 due to 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. 21. SUPPLEMENTAL REACH UP ASSISTANCE; CORONAVIRUS
RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a)(1) The sum of \$300,000.00 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:

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

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

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

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

(2) The Department shall distribute the supplemental grants in accordance with its standard process for distributing supplemental Reach Up financial assistance.

(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 closures, and significant business interruptions due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and may require supplemental funds to provide COVID-19-related resources for their families.

* * * Recovery Residences * * *

Sec. 22. RECOVERY RESIDENCES; CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND;
APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$350,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2021 for distribution to recovery residences for the purposes of:

(1) providing rental payments on behalf of residents who are unable to pay rent due to unemployment as a result of COVID-19; and

(2) purchasing cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment necessary to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 within a recovery residence.

(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 residents are able to remain in recovery residences despite experiencing unemployment as a result of COVID-19 and to ensure that recovery residences have the cleaning and other supplies necessary to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.

* * * COVID-19 Public Health Precautions on State Lands * * *

Sec. 23. AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES; COVID-19 PUBLIC
HEALTH EXPENSES ON STATE LANDS;
APPROPRIATIONS

In addition to any other funds appropriated to the Agency of Natural Resources in fiscal year 2021, the amount of \$3,500,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund in fiscal year 2021 for necessary expenditures incurred by the Agency for the purpose of implementing COVID-19 public health precautions on lands owned or controlled by the Agency of Natural Resources. Eligible projects to implement COVID-19 public health precautions include:

(1) updating of signage or information provided at entry to or access to trails, access areas, forests, parks, or other areas where information regarding COVID-19 public health precautions would be available to the users;

(2) temporary campsites or structures to allow for proper social distancing of users and staff;

(3) the cost or expense of services or equipment required to clean or sanitize public spaces; and

(4) expanding, improving, or adding public access to State lands and public waters to allow greater social distancing among users, including purchasing, building, repairing, or expanding parking areas, boat ramps, restrooms, trail heads, visitor centers, and other amenities.

* * * Legislative Branch; Health and Safety * * *

Sec. 24. LEGISLATIVE BRANCH; SPACE AND HEALTH AND SAFETY
ASSESSMENT; COVID-19 MITIGATION PREPARATION;
CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of up to \$750,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Sergeant at Arms in fiscal year 2021 as described below.

(1) Of the amount appropriated in this section, the Sergeant at Arms may use up to \$100,000.00 for a short-term and long-term space and health and safety needs assessment for the Legislative Branch for COVID-19 mitigation and meeting social distancing requirements. Any funds not expended for the assessment shall be used for the purpose described in subdivision (2) of this subsection (a).

(2) Of the amount appropriated in this section, the Sergeant at Arms may use up to \$150,000.00 for COVID-mitigation equipment or upgrades to the State House, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and other health and safety equipment or infrastructure; and

(3) Of the amount appropriated in this section, the Sergeant at Arms may use up to \$500,000.00 for the costs to purchase any equipment or implement upgrades or space transfers recommended in the assessment described in subdivision (1) of this subsection (a).

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary for addressing the health and safety of legislators, staff, and the public in the State House and other legislative space for the purpose of COVID-19 mitigation.

(c) On or before July 10, 2020, the Sergeant at Arms, in consultation with the Department of Buildings and General Services, shall contract with an independent third party for a short-term and long-term space and health and safety needs assessment for the Legislative Branch for COVID-19 mitigation. The assessment shall include:

(1) recommendations for health and safety infrastructure measures needed to protect staff, legislators, and the public, mitigate COVID-19, and meet social distancing requirements in the State House, and any other Legislative Branch space;

(2) short and long-term options for use of space or development of additional space in the Capitol Complex for legislators, committee meetings, and legislative staff offices, including 133 State Street; and

(3) short and long-term options for use of space for legislators, committee meetings, and legislative staff offices statewide.

(d) On or before August 19, 2020, the Sergeant at Arms shall submit the assessment described in subsection (a) of this section to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions. The assessment shall include cost estimates for the recommendations and options described in subdivisions (a)(1)–(3).

(e) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the Sergeant at Arms may enter into a contract with an independent third party for the assessment described in this section without the need to competitively bid such contracts. For the purposes of the assessment, the public health risk posed by COVID-19 shall be deemed to be an emergency situation that justifies the execution of sole source contracts pursuant to Bulletin 3.5, the State’s Procurement and Contracting Procedures.

Sec. 25. LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY;

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND; APPROPRIATION

(a) The sum of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to the Office of Legislative Information Technology in fiscal year 2021

for legislative information technology equipment, including any networking set-up required for the State House or new legislative space, camera and video set-up, and purchasing hardware, such as laptops and tablets.

(b) The General Assembly determines that the expenditure of monies from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as set forth in this section is necessary for addressing upgrades to the State House information technology infrastructure, the potential transition to a new legislative space to meet social distancing requirements, to support a remote work environment for legislators and legislative staff, and to ensure remote public access to legislative meetings resulting from the COVID-19 emergency.

* * * Strategic Plan for Equity and Inclusion * * *

Sec. 26. 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 its proven disproportionate impact on people of color, which has resulted in substantially greater difficulties in their abilities during the pandemic to find and obtain such services as access to justice, housing, employment, transportation, and emergency relief, has exacerbated the impact of existing race-based disparities and implicit bias so severely that immediate action is necessary.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 27. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.