

MEMO

DATE: Sept. 15, 2020

TO: Senate Appropriations Committee
Sen. Jane Kitchel, Chair

FROM: Senate Education Committee
Sen. Phil Baruth, Chair

RE: Education expenditures in FY21 budget

The Senate Education Committee has taken testimony on two items that pertain to the FY21 budget that we would like to request specific action on by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The first is a request to restore the full \$60,000 funding to Outright Vermont for their education program. Senate Education took testimony that the Agency of Education recommended a cut of \$40,000 from this \$60,000 allocation. The full allocation pays for one educator who resources adults, schools, and youth around issues that LGBTQ youth face. The Outright Vermont education program as a whole is highly impactful at the low total cost of \$163,469, meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth who otherwise potentially face troubling emotional and mental challenges, and truly in some instances saving the lives of those who consider suicide. In the absence of such education for school districts, Vermont risks being sued by the federal Department of Justice – a situation that arose in Burlington just last year over failing to provide affirmative treatment of trans students. The restoration of the \$40,000 cut is far less than the state and school districts would have to deal with such possible lawsuits in future, and Senate Education recommends this restoration in the strongest possible terms.

The second item is a request to hold the University of Vermont accountable for their budgeting practices given their use of General Fund dollars. Senate Education took extensive testimony from non-tenured faculty that in an attempt to balance the university's budget, UVM has made severe cuts to these faculty members' salaries. Despite the fact that the predicted reduction in enrollment has not materialized, 72 non-tenured faculty will experience salary cuts during the fall of 2020 of 25%, which may force some of them onto SNAP and make their ability to pay for housing, heat, electricity, and water precarious.

While Senate Education understands UVM's need to realize savings in the face of the pandemic and other budgetary pressures, these collective cuts, which will result in \$1.1 million of savings, could be achieved by cutting the salary of the top 72 administrative executives by only 6%. Indeed, the American Association of University Professors concluded that if UVM trimmed 3% from spending on administration, buildings, and branding, \$11.7 million annually could be restored to academics with no layoffs and no tuition increases.

Therefore, Sen. Education requests that the following language be included in the Appropriations bill regarding funding provided to UVM: "The University of Vermont, as a land-grant institution

and the state's flagship University, has a particular obligation to make its financial records open and transparent. That obligation has expanded as the State's efforts to stem UVM's financial losses to the Covid-19 emergency have expanded. For those reasons, and for the duration of the Governor's order, the University shall present to the House and Senate Appropriations and Education Committees, as well as the UVM community, 1) a full, specific and timely accounting of all funds appropriated and expended during the span of time covered by the Governor's emergency orders; and 2) the revenue-loss projections upon which the University's present and future budget cuts are premised, and how those projections bear out as actual data becomes available."

The Senate Education Committee thanks Senate Appropriations for its consideration of these requests.