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H.703

SHORT FORM

Introduced by Representative Toleno of Brattleboro

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Commerce and trade; workforce development

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to accomplish the following:

(1) Immediate response to critical workforce shortages, prioritizing health and safety, including:

(A) \$1,000,000.00 for UVM and VSU mental health nursing program funding;

(B) \$6,000,000.00 to VSU to double the nursing program capacity;

(C) \$3,000,000.00 for UVM to scale up its nursing program by 50 percent; and

(D) \$2,000,000.00 to AHS for project management, stakeholder participation, and implementation costs of the Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan, exclusive of financial incentive programs.

(2) Immediate strategies and funding for expanding the labor force, both in the number of participants and in participation rates, including:

1 (A) \$5,000,000.00 to the UVM Office of Engagement to administer
2 and equitably grant a statewide grant program of \$5,000.00 per graduate for
3 recent college graduates of Vermont higher education institutions who stay to
4 work in Vermont.

5 (B) \$3,000,000.00 to VSAC to administer up to \$3,000.00 per
6 individual for matching grants for paid Vermont internships or registered
7 apprenticeships where the grant matches employer contribution up to the grant
8 limit. The employer contribution must meet Vermont livable wage
9 requirements on its own or any existing internship or apprenticeship rules for
10 paid work experiences.

11 (C) A two-year exemption from pension and retirement benefit rules
12 that restrict or limit retired workers from returning to the workforce during the
13 pandemic.

14 (D) \$2,000,000.00 to the State Refugee Office to administer as grants
15 to refugee- or New American-focused programs working in Vermont, to
16 support increased in-migration or retention of recent arrivals.

17 (E) \$300,000.00 to VTC to develop a skilled meat cutter training and
18 apprenticeship facility.

19 (F) Licensing:

20 (i) waive licensing fees where:

21 (I) critical public services are delivered; or

1 (II) the sector is critical to the current or future economy of the
2 State;

3 (ii) the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) to expand
4 recognition of work and credentials experience out of state or country for
5 professions where:

6 (I) critical public services are delivered; or

7 (II) the sector is critical to the current or future economy of the
8 State; and

9 (III) doing so would not jeopardize public safety; and

10 (iii) OPR to design expanded apprenticeship pathways to licensure
11 in collaboration with the State Workforce Development Board Credentialing
12 Committee and the Department of Labor.

13 (G) Justice Involved or Recently Involved Individuals.

14 \$1,500,000.00 to the Department of Corrections to grant to expand capacity of
15 Community Justice Centers or other retraining nonprofit organizations, or both,
16 who work with justice-involved, or recently justice-involved, individuals to
17 support adults with low-level offenses in finding job training, upskilling, and
18 record expunging opportunities so they can fully participate in the labor force.

19 (3) Immediate strategies and funding for strategic sectors, both current
20 demand-driven and future-driven initiatives.

1 (A) Future-driven initiatives concerning the green economy and
2 climate workforce.

3 (B) Demand-driven initiatives, including \$2,000,000.00 to ACCD to
4 regrant to entities working to scale investments in sector and occupation career
5 pathways to complete Talent Pipelines for all the priority sectors and
6 occupations within two years, with priority given to recipients of Good Jobs
7 funding. Primary sectors: construction, health care, manufacturing (food and
8 durable goods), digital marketing, accounting, product development, supply
9 chain, energy system, software development, and outdoor recreation. Primary
10 occupations: customer service.

11 (C) Performance Measurement. The Committee on Government
12 Accountability, in collaboration with the Chief Performance Officer and Chief
13 Equity Officer, will develop performance measurement frameworks for
14 evaluating stimulus- and incentive-based spending on specific State positions,
15 general occupations, and sectors, including measuring the cascading impact of
16 State investments in State employee compensation and incentive-based
17 retention or recruitment on State supported entities delivering community-
18 based solutions, specifically, social services with related occupations that are
19 significantly financially dependent on State-set reimbursement rates for ability
20 to change their compensation structures. These must also include social equity

1 performance notes to ensure that targeted workforce incentives are improving,
2 not exacerbating, inequities.

3 (4) Investment in building a statewide ecosystem to promote continuous
4 lifelong learning.

5 (A) Create a Career and Technical Education Redesign Task Force
6 to:

7 (i) Reimagine and redesign the CTE system to ensure that 100
8 percent of Vermont high school graduates either hold a credential of value, are
9 in a post-secondary program within a year of graduation, or are in a training
10 program for a credential of value within one year of graduation.

11 (ii) Develop a new funding model with no disincentives connected
12 to increased student participation in CTE programming.

13 (iii) Develop a next generation CTE delivery model, financing,
14 and governance system and a transitional road map to move from the current
15 state to the new model within five years.

16 (iv) Redesign CTE system for the digital age and scale online
17 learning in order to develop curriculum and career pathways that will support
18 technological resilience in Vermont's workforce.

19 (B) CTE Modernization. \$35,000,000.00 for upgrades to existing
20 facilities to expand CTE course offerings across the State for middle school

1 students, high school students, and adults and expand teaching modalities (in
2 person, hybrid, online).

3 (C) Create a Higher Education Strategy Task Force to develop a clear
4 and brief set of strategic objectives for State higher education funding, beyond
5 financial viability, and address:

6 (i) what the system and its institutions are expected to do; and

7 (ii) how integrated the institutions should be in the workforce
8 development ecosystem.

9 (D) Create a public-private partnership with Advance Vermont to
10 support the State's goal under 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age
11 Vermonters hold a credential of value by 2025, including:

12 (i) formulating policy recommendations for the administration and
13 the General Assembly;

14 (ii) monitoring and disseminating data regarding the performance
15 of the State's attainment of the goal;

16 (iii) creating and maintaining public-facing communications and
17 resources to increase awareness of the value of postsecondary education and
18 training and the variety of education and training pathways;

19 (iv) convening members of the education, employer, nonprofit,
20 and philanthropic communities and State agencies to identify gaps and
21 opportunities for collaboration;

1 (v) supporting efforts to coordinate and implement regional
2 attainment initiatives; and

3 (vi) ensuring full transparency of all educational and occupational
4 credentials and competencies that are delivered, issued, funded, authorized,
5 overseen, or governed in Vermont.

6 (5) Investment in an agile, technologically resilient workforce, including
7 \$250,000.00 each to UVM and the VSU to support staff capacity to engage in
8 collaborative network activities and be more responsive to demand-driven
9 training and development needs and an additional \$250,000.00 to source the
10 data and create and maintain an accurate, curated Jobs Service/Database
11 (coordinate the cooperative sharing of information across all Vermont colleges
12 and universities) of jobs for which recent graduates would be qualified to
13 encourage recent college graduates to start their careers in Vermont.

14 (6) Enabling every worker to participate in the workforce of the future
15 through comprehensive support, including optimization of the Workforce
16 Innovation and Opportunity Act system, and \$400,000.00 to the Department of
17 Labor to regrant as a performance-based grant to a Vermont based nonprofit
18 with statewide reach to design, market, and pilot a job coaching and career
19 planning help-line and online platform to provide incumbent workers with
20 career counseling, resources for evaluating job transitions, and risk/reward
21 calculation of switching employers.

1 (7) Investment in the up-skilling of private sector employers to support
2 the evolution of business and organizational models, including:

3 (A) \$1,500,000.00 to ACCD to regrant a performance-based contract
4 for statewide delivery of a SmallBusiness411 helpline and website to help
5 small businesses navigate available resources to an entity with statewide reach,
6 small business expertise, and the technical knowledge to expand upon the SBA
7 Community Navigator Program. The successful grant proposal must include a
8 marketing budget to boost visibility of the program.

9 (B) \$2,000,000.00 to ACCD to regrant to the Vermont Sustainable
10 Jobs Fund to assemble, develop, and design the content, delivery model, and
11 statewide roll-out of a new employer initiative to upskill employers.

12 (i) The initiative will improve access to employer best practices,
13 HR information, interpreted labor market info, business coaching, and support
14 for adapting business models to current market conditions.

15 (ii) The initiative will provide training to businesses on how to
16 operate remotely effectively over the long-term.

17 (iii) The content shall include an employer of choice program to
18 support businesses prioritizing human well-being, healthy work, and high-
19 quality employment practices and creativity and innovation in the way we
20 work, for example, four-day work weeks, benefits, work culture, employee
21 ownership, and B-Corp certification.

1 (iv) VSJF will collaborate with, and regrant funds through
2 performance-based grants to, the RDCs and specialized trade and business
3 associations for sector- or market-specific training and to fund local and
4 regional distribution and trainings.

5 (C) \$500,000.00 to ACCD to regrant a performance-based contract
6 for statewide delivery of business coaching to support employee ownership
7 business models, including worker co-ops and employee stock ownership plans
8 (ESOPs).

9 (D) Create a task force on ESOPs and worker ownership business
10 models to make recommendations on how the State can ease regulation to
11 stimulate transition to ESOPs or worker-ownership.

12 (E) \$500,000.00 to ACCD to regrant a performance-based contract
13 for statewide delivery of business coaching to the BIPOC Business Network to
14 support training for BIPOC workers.

15 (F) Update Vermont Training Program criteria for eligibility to allow
16 training and coaching for small business owners and their management teams
17 to improve their capacity to evolve and lead their small businesses and increase
18 base funding for this program to \$2 million per year.

19 (8) Invest in new models of connection-building across public and
20 private stakeholders to improve alignment, collaboration, insights, and
21 strategy, including:

- 1 (A) the creation and convening of a Vermont Workforce Network
2 administered by a Connecting Organization, including:
- 3 (i) providing sub-grant, performance-based awards to six regional
4 Workforce-Education Business Councils, each of whom will employ a full-
5 time regional Navigator; and
- 6 (ii) coordinating with the implementation of VDOL Pilot Project
7 of Workforce Expansion Specialists in six regions of the State; and
- 8 (B) \$3,000,000.00 to ACCD to make a performance-based grant to a
9 nonprofit to serve as the statewide Connecting Organization.

10 An act relating to promoting workforce development

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

12 (TEXT OMITTED IN SHORT-FORM BILLS)