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

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

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

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

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

(F) Licensing:

   (i) waive licensing fees where:

   (I) critical public services are delivered; or
(II) the sector is critical to the current or future economy of the State;

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

(I) critical public services are delivered; or

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

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

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

(G) Justice Involved or Recently Involved Individuals.

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

(3) Immediate strategies and funding for strategic sectors, both current demand-driven and future-driven initiatives.
(A) Future-driven initiatives concerning the green economy and climate workforce.

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

(C) Performance Measurement. The Committee on Government Accountability, in collaboration with the Chief Performance Officer and Chief Equity Officer, will develop performance measurement frameworks for evaluating stimulus- and incentive-based spending on specific State positions, general occupations, and sectors, including measuring the cascading impact of State investments in State employee compensation and incentive-based retention or recruitment on State supported entities delivering community-based solutions, specifically, social services with related occupations that are significantly financially dependent on State-set reimbursement rates for ability to change their compensation structures. These must also include social equity
performance notes to ensure that targeted workforce incentives are improving, not exacerbating, inequities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(B) CTE Modernization. $35,000,000.00 for upgrades to existing facilities to expand CTE course offerings across the State for middle school
students, high school students, and adults and expand teaching modalities (in
person, hybrid, online).

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

(i) what the system and its institutions are expected to do; and
(ii) how integrated the institutions should be in the workforce
development ecosystem.

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

(i) formulating policy recommendations for the administration and
the General Assembly;
(ii) monitoring and disseminating data regarding the performance
of the State’s attainment of the goal;
(iii) creating and maintaining public-facing communications and
resources to increase awareness of the value of postsecondary education and
training and the variety of education and training pathways;
(iv) convening members of the education, employer, nonprofit,
and philanthropic communities and State agencies to identify gaps and
opportunities for collaboration;
(v) supporting efforts to coordinate and implement regional attainment initiatives; and

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

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

(6) Enabling every worker to participate in the workforce of the future through comprehensive support, including optimization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act system, and $400,000.00 to the Department of Labor to regrant as a performance-based grant to a Vermont based nonprofit with statewide reach to design, market, and pilot a job coaching and career planning help-line and online platform to provide incumbent workers with career counseling, resources for evaluating job transitions, and risk/reward calculation of switching employers.
(7) Investment in the up-skilling of private sector employers to support the evolution of business and organizational models, including:

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

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

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

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

   (iii) The content shall include an employer of choice program to support businesses prioritizing human well-being, healthy work, and high-quality employment practices and creativity and innovation in the way we work, for example, four-day work weeks, benefits, work culture, employee ownership, and B-Corp certification.
(iv) VSJF will collaborate with, and regrant funds through performance-based grants to, the RDCs and specialized trade and business associations for sector- or market-specific training and to fund local and regional distribution and trainings.

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

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

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

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

(8) Invest in new models of connection-building across public and private stakeholders to improve alignment, collaboration, insights, and strategy, including:
(A) the creation and convening of a Vermont Workforce Network administered by a Connecting Organization, including:

(i) providing sub-grant, performance-based awards to six regional Workforce-Education Business Councils, each of whom will employ a full-time regional Navigator; and

(ii) coordinating with the implementation of VDOL Pilot Project of Workforce Expansion Specialists in six regions of the State; and

(B) $3,000,000.00 to ACCD to make a performance-based grant to a nonprofit to serve as the statewide Connecting Organization.

An act relating to promoting workforce development

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

(TEXT OMITTED IN SHORT-FORM BILLS)