

1 H.703

2 ~~SHORT FORM~~

3 Introduced by Representative Toleno of Brattleboro

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Commerce and trade; workforce development

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 (2) Immediate strategies and funding for expanding the labor force, both
20 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
16 both, who work with justice-involved, or recently justice-involved, individuals
17 to support adults with low-level offenses in finding job training, upskilling,
18 and record expunging opportunities so they can fully participate in the labor
19 force.

20 (3) Immediate strategies and funding for strategic sectors, both current
21 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,
7 including \$250,000.00 each to UVM and the VSU to support staff capacity to
8 engage in collaborative network activities and be more responsive to demand-
9 driven training and development needs and an additional \$250,000.00 to
10 source the data and create and maintain an accurate, curated Jobs
11 Service/Database (coordinate the cooperative sharing of information across all
12 Vermont colleges and universities) of jobs for which recent graduates would be
13 qualified to encourage recent college graduates to start their careers in
14 Vermont.

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

1 career counseling, resources for evaluating job transitions, and risk/reward
2 calculation of switching employers.

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

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

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

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

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

19 (iii) The content shall include an employer of choice program to
20 support businesses prioritizing human well-being, healthy work, and high-
21 quality employment practices and creativity and innovation in the way we

1 work, for example, four-day work weeks, benefits, work culture, employee
2 ownership, and B-Corp certification.

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 (A) the creation and convening of a Vermont Workforce Network
5 administered by a Connecting Organization, including:

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

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

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

13 An act relating to promoting workforce development

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

15 (TEXT OMITTED IN SHORT FORM BILLS)

*Sec. 1. IMMEDIATE STRATEGIES AND FUNDING FOR EXPANDING
THE LABOR FORCE; INCREASING THE NUMBER OF
PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPATION RATES;
APPROPRIATIONS*

~~*In fiscal year 2023, the following amounts are appropriated from the General Fund to the following recipients for the purposes specified:*~~

~~*(1) \$5,000,000.00 to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement, in consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, to administer a statewide forgivable loan program of \$5,000.00 per graduate for recent college graduates across all Vermont higher education institutions who commit to work in Vermont for two years after graduation.*~~

~~*(2) \$1,000,000.00 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.*~~

~~*(3) \$387,000.00 to Vermont Technical College to develop a skilled meat cutter training and apprenticeship facility.*~~

~~*Sec. 2. CTE FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE, FINDINGS*~~

~~*(a) Vermont's career and technical education (CTE) system is critical to ensuring that all Vermonters have access to the high quality resources they need to explore a wide variety of career pathways, earn a postsecondary credential of value, and establish a productive career.*~~

~~*(b) CTE is a vital component of our educational system, supporting and delivering on the goals established by the General Assembly in 2013 Acts and Resolves No. 77 (flexible pathways), 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189 (workforce development), and in achieving our attainment goal, which is that*~~

~~70 percent of working age Vermonters have a credential of value by 2025 (10 V.S.A. § 546).~~

~~(c) CTE is also an equity lever, providing every student access to critical workforce training, postsecondary coursework, and the real-world skills and networks that prepare our youth to continue to earn and learn during and after high school.~~

~~(d) As of the fall semester of the 2021–2022 school year, students were enrolling in CTE programs at a higher rate than at the beginning of the pandemic, increasing from 4,169 to 4,565. In the 2020–2021 school year, Vermont’s CTE system awarded Tier II credentials of value to 459 students.~~

~~(e) Since 2015, through legislative initiatives such as 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 51, 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 69, 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189, 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 80, and most recently 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, the General Assembly and other stakeholders in education and in State government have been working to identify, understand, and resolve long-standing concerns related to the functioning of the CTE system.~~

~~(f) In 2018, the Agency of Education embarked on a collaborative process that included students, legislators, and communities across the State to develop a strategic vision and aspirational goals to help guide the transformation of the CTE system.~~

~~(g) The State Board of Education adopted the Agency of Education's vision and goals for CTE that "all Vermont learners attain their postsecondary goals by having access to career and technical education systems that are equitable, efficient, integrated and collaborative."~~

~~(h) 2018 Act and Resolves No. 189 committed Vermont to a redesign of its workforce development and training system, including the approval of up to four pilot sites or projects to examine the way our CTE system is funded and governed.~~

~~(i) In a report dated June 14, 2021, the Agency of Education reported on its progress, which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report presented possible alternatives to our current funding structure, which is widely seen as a barrier to enrollment. However, these alternatives were based on an examination of only the CTE school district funding model and did not include the study of governance models. The report recommended completing this study of CTE funding and governance models to propose actionable implementation steps for the State.~~

~~(j) The Agency of Education's State plan for federal Perkins funds is aligned to the vision and goals created through collaborative processes that included a public comment period. Processes required in the federal legislation like the biennial Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment will~~

~~strengthen the role of CTE in each region and help to focus the use of limited federal funds to improve the system.~~

~~Sec. 3. FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES OF
CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN VERMONT~~

~~(a) There is appropriated to the Agency of Education for fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$180,000.00 from the General Fund to contract for services to:~~

~~(1) complete a systematic examination of the existing funding structures of career technical education (CTE) in Vermont and how these structures impede or promote the State's educational and workforce development goals;~~

~~(2) examine CTE governance structures in relationship to those funding structures;~~

~~(3) examine the implications of the existing funding and governance structures for kindergarten through grade 12 schools and adult education;~~

~~(4) consider the CTE funding and governance structures in other states;~~

~~and~~

~~(5) identify and prioritize potential new models of CTE funding and governance structures to reduce barriers to enrollment and to improve the quality, duration, impact, and access to CTE statewide.~~

~~(b) In performing its work, the contractor shall consult with the consultant and any other stakeholders involved in completing the report on the design, implementation, and costs of an integrated and coherent adult basic education,~~

~~adult secondary education, and postsecondary career and technical education system pursuant to 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.3.~~

~~(c)(1) On or before March 1, 2023, the Agency of Education shall issue a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on the status of its work under subsection (a) of this section.~~

~~(2) On or before July 1, 2023, the Agency of Education shall develop an implementation plan, including recommended steps to design and implement new funding and governance models, and issue a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs describing the results of its work under subsection (a) of this section and making recommendations for legislative action.~~

~~Sec. 4. INVESTMENT IN THE UP-SKILLING OF PRIVATE SECTOR
EMPLOYERS TO SUPPORT THE EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS
AND ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS; APPROPRIATIONS~~

~~In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to regrant a performance-based contract to the Vermont Professionals of Color~~

~~Network for statewide delivery of business coaching and other forms of training to BIPOC business owners, networking and special convenings, and career fairs, workshops and paid internships, career guidance, and other support for BIPOC workers across the State.~~

Sec. 5. REGIONAL WORKFORCE EXPANSION SYSTEM

~~*(a) Regional Workforce Expansion System. The amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor to launch and lead a coordinated regional system to support the State's workforce expansion efforts that is designed to:*~~

~~*(1) support employers in tailoring their work requirements, conditions, and expectations to better access local workers;*~~

~~*(2) collaborate with local education and training providers and regional workforce partners, to create and regularly distribute data related to local labor force supply and demand; and*~~

~~*(3) create and share work-based learning and training opportunities with secondary and postsecondary students, local workforce expansion partners, and others interested in starting or advancing in their career.*~~

~~*(b) System infrastructure.*~~

~~*(1) The Vermont Department of Labor shall make investments that improve and expand regional capacity to connect supply (workers) and demand (employment) in real-time.*~~

~~(2) The Department shall place in the Barre, Bennington, Rutland, St. Albans and St. Johnsbury areas, six state-funded Workforce Expansion Specialists who are limited-service, full-time-employees and who shall report to the Workforce Development Division.~~

(c) Coordination.

~~(1) The Department shall co-convene regular, regional meetings of education, training, business, and service provider partners; coordinate local workforce information collection and distribution, assist with pilot projects, provide targeted sector support, and develop localized career resources such as information for career counseling, local job fairs, career expos, available to a wide range of stakeholders.~~

~~(2) The Department shall develop labor market information reports by CTE district to support discussion and decision making that will address local labor market challenges and opportunities and support a regional approach to solving local or unique labor supply challenges.~~

~~(d) Report. On or before December 15, 2024, the Department shall provide a narrative update on the progress made in hiring staff, establishing interagency agreements, developing regional information exchange systems, and serving jobseekers and employers to the House and Senate Committees of jurisdiction. The report shall also recommend ongoing metrics that can be~~

easily recorded and reported at the local and State levels on a regular basis to meet multiple information needs.

(e) Implementation. The Department of Labor shall begin implementing the Regional Workforce Expansion System on or before August 1, 2022.

Sec. 6. JUSTICE INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; PILOT PROGRAM

(a) Findings.

(1) Justice-involved individuals are persons who hold a conviction record and may or may not have served time in a corrections facility.

(2) 95 percent of incarcerated individuals will be released to their communities and between 78–83 percent of those released are between 25 and 54 years of age, which is prime working age.

(3) 63 percent of incarcerated individuals in the Vermont Southern State Correctional Facility reported job training as the most helpful program to meet their needs.

(b) Policy; appropriations.

(1)(A) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$417,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections to address vocational enhancement needs.

~~(B) The Department shall use funds to transition vocational training space within existing correctional facilities to support continued education and vocational training and placement in the community.~~

~~(C) The Department may allocate funds over three years, consistent with the following:~~

~~(i) \$267,000 for transition development, to include equipment, renovation of vocational space, and/or mobile lab in one or more sites.~~

~~(ii) \$100,000 for training partner support.~~

~~(iii) \$50,000 for development of curriculum.~~

~~(2) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections to subgrant to the Vermont Works for Women, which may be allocated over not more than three years, to establish a community-based pilot reentry program at the Chittenden Correctional Facility that will provide continuity of services for justice-involved women and:~~

~~(A) expand VWW's current employment readiness program within the Chittenden facility by building pathways for coordinated transition to employment;~~

~~(B) focus on the first six months after individuals are released from the facility,~~

~~(C) coordinate with local community resources, parole and probation offices, and supports to ensure successful transition into the community;~~

~~(D) assist individuals in successfully transitioning into new jobs; and~~

~~(E) work with employers to support successful hiring and best practices to support justice involved employees.~~

~~(c) Report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Corrections shall create and submit a report on Workforce and Education Training Programs in Correctional Facilities to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee; the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Commerce and Economic Development; and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Judiciary. The report shall:~~

~~(1) identify program design, logistical needs, and policy changes to current Department of Corrections facility-based training and educational programs necessary to successfully support justice involved individuals' reentry into their communities, including changes to programs that better support individuals' skill development, knowledge, and support needed to qualify and secure a position in a critical occupation in Vermont;~~

~~(2) identify disparities of outcomes for justice-involved BIPOC individuals in facility-based training and educational programming and~~

~~successful reentry into the community and solutions for addressing the disparities;~~

~~(3) provide an update on the Department of Corrections Vocational Enhancement work funding in FY23; and~~

~~(4) provide an update on what aspects of the Reentry Pilot Program could and should be replicated in other correctional facilities in Vermont.~~

~~Sec. 7. REPEALS~~

~~10 V.S.A. §§ 544 and 545 are repealed.~~

~~Sec. 8. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM~~

~~(a) Vermont Work-Based Learning and Training Program. The Department of Labor shall develop the statewide Work-Based Learning and Training Program that serves transitioning secondary and postsecondary students and Vermonters seeking work-based experience as part of a career change and is designed to:~~

~~(1) support Vermonters who are graduating from postsecondary education or a secondary CTE program or who are pursuing a career change with a paid on-the-job work experience lasting 12 weeks or less;~~

~~(2) establish a statewide platform available to all employers to list their internships, returnships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship opportunities and for jobseekers to view and access information about specific opportunities, and~~

~~(3) support employers by providing them with assistance in developing and implementing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities.~~

~~(b) Definitions. As used in this section:~~

~~(1) “Internship” means a work-based learning experience with an employer where the participant may, but does not necessarily, receive academic credit.~~

~~(2) “Pre-apprenticeship” is a program of combined learning and work-based experiences that lead to an informal apprenticeship or formal registered apprenticeship program.~~

~~(3) “Registered Apprenticeship” is a program approved by the Vermont Department of Labor as a federally recognized apprenticeship program.~~

~~(4) “Returnship” means an on-the-job learning experience for an individual who is returning to the workforce after an extended absence or is seeking a limited-duration on-the-job work experience in a different occupation or occupational setting as part of a career change.~~

~~(c) Activities. The Department may use funds appropriated to it for the Program to:~~

~~(1) build and administer the Program;~~

~~(2) develop an online platform that will connect students and jobseekers with work-based learning and training opportunities within Vermont,~~

~~(3) support work-based learning and training opportunities with public and private employers available to prospective workers located in or relocating to Vermont;~~

~~(4) promote work-based learning and training as a valuable component of a talent pipeline; and~~

~~(5) assist employers in developing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities.~~

~~(d) Data; goals. The Department shall collect data and establish goals and performance measures that demonstrate Program results for activities funded through the Program.~~

~~(e) State participation. The Department shall engage appropriate State agencies and departments to expand Program opportunities with State government and with entities awarded State contracts.~~

~~(f) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report on recommended metrics for measuring Program performance to the relevant committees of jurisdiction.~~

Sec. 8a. INTERNSHIP COST OFFSET INITIATIVE

~~(a) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$3,000,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor for an Internship Cost Offset initiative.~~

~~(b) The Department shall design and implement the Initiative to expand the number of postsecondary students participating in an internship with a Vermont employer, consistent with the following:~~

~~(1) Students enrolled in an approved postsecondary institution are eligible for not more than \$3,000.00 for tuition and fees directly related to participating in an internship with a Vermont employer for which they are also receiving postsecondary credit toward a degree.~~

~~(2) The Department shall enter into an agreement with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to develop and administer the Initiative, which shall include an amount not to exceed 7 percent for costs associated with the administration of the program.~~

~~(c) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report on recommended metrics for measuring Initiative performance to the relevant committees of jurisdiction.~~

~~Sec. 9. THE VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM~~

~~(a) The Vermont Trades Scholarship Program is created and shall be administered by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse initial licensing fees, exam fees, and tuition payments under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.~~

~~(b) To be eligible for a scholarship under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall:~~

~~(1) be enrolled in an industry recognized training and certification program that leads to initial employment or career advancement in a building, mechanical, industrial, or medical trade, or in clean energy, energy efficiency, weatherization, or clean transportation;~~

~~(2) demonstrate financial need;~~

~~(3) register with the Vermont Department of Labor for the purpose of receiving relevant job referrals, if unemployed; and~~

~~(4) agree to work in their profession in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure or certification completion for each year of scholarship awarded.~~

~~(c)(1) The Corporation shall give preference to students attending a Vermont-based training program or, if one isn't available for their certification, an offer of employment or promotion from a Vermont employer upon completion.~~

~~(2) The Corporation shall give priority to applicants who have not received other assistance.~~

~~(d) There shall be no deadline to apply for a scholarship under this section. Scholarships shall be awarded on a rolling basis if funds are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be~~

~~available to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional scholarships as set forth in this section.~~

~~(e) The sum of \$3,000,000.00 in base General Funds is appropriated to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for scholarships for trades students under the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program.~~

~~Sec. 10. THE VERMONT TRADES LOAN REIMBURSEMENT~~

~~PROGRAM~~

~~(a) The Vermont Trades Loan Repayment Reimbursement Program is created and shall be administered by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse funds under the Program to eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.~~

~~(b) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual, shall:~~

~~(1) be a Vermont resident; and~~

~~(2) be employed in an occupation in the building, mechanical, industrial, or medical trades, or in the clean energy, energy efficiency, weatherization, or clean transportation sectors, for an average of at least 30 hours per week for least one full calendar year before applying.~~

~~(c) For every year of work in a qualifying occupation, an individual shall be eligible for up to \$5,000.00 in loan repayment reimbursement. Reimbursements shall not exceed the total amount of educational debt owed.~~

~~(d) There shall be no deadline to apply for loan repayment reimbursement under this section. Loan repayment shall be awarded on a rolling basis if funds are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be available to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional loan repayment as set forth in this section.~~

~~(e) The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for loan repayment for trades professionals under the Program.~~

Sec. 11. CTE CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAM; REVOLVING LOAN

FUND

~~(a) Purpose. This section authorizes and provides funding for the CTE Construction and Rehabilitation Experiential Learning Program and Revolving Loan Fund, the purposes of which are to:~~

~~(1) expand the experiential and educational opportunities for high school and adult CTE students to work directly on construction projects,~~

~~(2) build community partnerships among CTE centers, housing organizations, government, and private businesses;~~

~~(3) beautify communities and rehabilitate buildings that are underperforming assets;~~

~~(4) expand housing access to Vermonters in communities throughout the State; and~~

~~(5) improve property values while teaching high school and adult students trade skills.~~

~~(b) Appropriation; creation of fund; administration.~~

~~(1) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$15,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to create and administer the CTE Construction and Rehabilitation Experiential Learning Program and Revolving Loan Fund pursuant to this section.~~

~~(2) The Board may use not more than five percent of the Fund for its costs of administration.~~

~~(c) Proposals; applications; funding.~~

~~(1) A regional CTE center, working in collaboration with one or more housing and community partners, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, or municipalities, shall identify construction projects that would be relevant and appropriate for CTE students enrolled in construction, electrical, plumbing, design, business management, or other CTE programs, including.~~

~~(A) rehabilitation of residential properties that are blighted or not code-compliant;~~

~~(B) new residential construction projects or improvements to land in cases of critical community need; and~~

~~(C) commercial construction projects that have substantial community benefit.~~

~~(2) Prior to or during the application process, a CTE center and its partners may consult with the Board to identify and consider potential funding partners to leverage amounts available through the Fund.~~

~~(3) A CTE center and its partners shall apply to the Board for funding by submitting a project application that includes the information required by the Board and addresses the following:~~

~~(A) the educational benefits for students and fit with the CTE curriculum;~~

~~(B) the community benefits for the neighborhood, municipality, or region in which the project is located; and~~

~~(C) the partners with whom the CTE center is collaborating and the respective responsibility for the aspects of a project, including:~~

~~(i) educational instruction and academic credit;~~

~~(ii) project management;~~

~~(iii) insurance coverage for students and the property,~~

~~(iv) compensation and benefits, including compliance with labor laws, standards, and practices; and~~

~~(v) property acquisition, ownership, and transfer.~~

~~(4) A CTE center may use funding for, and shall specify in its application the allocation of costs associated with:~~

~~(A) acquisition, design, permitting, construction, marketing, and other building-related expenses; and~~

~~(B) costs for labor, including for student wages and for instructor compensation during the academic year as well as for summer or other work that is not otherwise budgeted during the academic year.~~

~~(d) Eligibility; review; approval. The Board may approve an application that includes the information required by subsection (c) of this section and provide funding for a project that meets the following eligibility criteria:~~

~~(1) The project involves the rehabilitation of blighted or otherwise noncode compliant property, or new residential construction projects or improvements to land in cases of critical need, and results in a building with not more than four residential dwelling units.~~

~~(2) The project includes a weatherization component.~~

~~(3) Students working on the project receive academic credit, a competitive wage, or both.~~

~~(e) Affordability; flexibility. If appropriate in the circumstances, the Board may condition funding for a project on the inclusion of one or mechanisms addressing the affordability of the property upon rent or sale.~~

~~(f) Funding; proceeds; revolving loans.~~

~~(1) The Board shall provide funding for projects from the amounts available in the Fund in the form of zero-interest loans, in an amount, for a period, and upon terms specified by the Board.~~

~~(2) The Board shall return to the Fund any proceeds realized to provide funding for future projects.~~

~~(g) Report. The Board shall address the implementation of this section in its annual report to the General Assembly.~~

~~Sec. 12. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT~~

~~In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$125,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division to subgrant to the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children to develop and implement a comprehensive early childhood educator recruitment campaign.~~

~~Sec. 13. HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE; LEGISLATIVE INTENT~~

~~(a) The General Assembly values all health care workers, at every level and in each component of the health care system. The General Assembly also acknowledges the many struggles faced by health care workers and that the~~

~~pandemic has placed further strain on an already taxed system. Many health care workers have not had their pay adjusted over time to address increases in the cost of living, essentially amounting to pay cuts from year to year. Health care workers have experienced burnout, trauma, and moral injuries due to a history of underfunding and the present stress of the pandemic.~~

~~(b) In order to retain and recruit health care workers in Vermont, it is the intent of the General Assembly to invest in multiple solutions aimed at reinforcing our health care workforce in the present and sustaining our health care workers into the future.~~

~~Sec. 14. EMERGENCY GRANTS TO SUPPORT NURSE EDUCATORS~~

~~(a) The sum of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated to the Department of Health from General Fund in fiscal year 2023 and shall carry forward for the purpose of providing emergency interim grants to Vermont's nursing schools over three years to increase the compensation for their nurse faculty and staff, with \$1,000,000.00 to be distributed in each of fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025 to increase the compensation for each full-time-equivalent (FTE) member of the clinical and didactic nurse faculty and staff. The Department shall distribute the funds among the nursing schools in Vermont equitably based on each school's proportion of nursing faculty and staff to the total number of FTE nursing faculty and staff across all nursing schools statewide.~~

~~(b) If the nurse faculty or staff, or both, of a nursing school receiving a grant under this section are subject to a collective bargaining agreement, the use of the grant funds provided to the nursing school for those faculty or staff, or both, shall be subject to impact bargaining between the nursing school and the collective bargaining representative of the nurse faculty or staff, or both, to the extent required by the applicable collective bargaining agreement.~~

Sec. 15. NURSE PRECEPTOR INCENTIVE GRANTS; HOSPITALS;

WORKING GROUP; REPORT

~~(a)(1) The sum of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated to the Agency of Human Services from the General Fund in fiscal year 2023 to provide incentive grants to hospital-employed nurses in Vermont to serve as preceptors for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing school programs. The Agency shall distribute the funds to hospitals employing nurses who provide student preceptor supervision based on the number of preceptor hours to be provided, at a rate of \$5.00 per preceptor hour, or a lesser hourly rate if the need exceeds the available funds.~~

~~(2) If nurse preceptors receiving compensation pursuant to a grant awarded to a hospital under this section are subject to a collective bargaining agreement, the use of the grant funds provided to the hospital for the nurse preceptors shall be subject to impact bargaining between the hospital and the~~

~~collective bargaining representative of the nurses to the extent required by the collective bargaining agreement.~~

~~(b)(1) The Director of Health Care Reform or designee in the Agency of Human Services shall convene a working group of stakeholders representing nursing schools, long-term care facilities, designated and specialized service agencies, federally qualified health centers, home health agencies, primary care practices, and other health care facilities to:~~

~~(A) identify ways to increase clinical placement opportunities across a variety of health care settings for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing school programs;~~

~~(B) establish sustainable funding models for compensating nurses serving as preceptors or for supporting the hiring of additional nurses to alleviate the pressures on nurse preceptors, or both; and~~

~~(C) develop an action plan for implementing the clinical placement expansion and sustainable funding models identified and established pursuant to subdivisions (A) and (B) of this subdivision (1), including addressing the need for student housing opportunities.~~

~~(2) On or before January 15, 2023, the Director of Health Care Reform shall provide the working group's action plan and any recommendations for legislative action to the House Committees on Health Care, on Commerce and Economic Development, and on Appropriations and the Senate Committees on~~

~~*Health and Welfare, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
and on Appropriations.*~~

~~*Sec. 16. HEALTH CARE EMPLOYER NURSING PIPELINE AND
APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM*~~

~~*(a) The sum of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) from the General Fund in fiscal year 2023 and shall carry forward for the purpose of providing grants to health care employers, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, designated and specialized service agencies, federally qualified health centers, and other health care providers, to establish or expand partnerships with Vermont nursing schools to create nursing pipeline or apprenticeship programs, or both, that will train members of the health care employers' existing staff, including personal care attendants, licensed nursing assistants, and licensed practical nurses, to become higher-level nursing professionals. Through a combination of scholarship awards, grants awarded to health care employers pursuant to this section, and the health care employer's contributions, the trainees' tuition and fees shall be covered in full, and trainees shall be provided with assistance in meeting their living costs, such as housing and child care, while attending the program.*~~

~~*(b) In awarding grants pursuant to this section, VSAC shall give priority to health care employer proposals based on the following criteria.*~~

~~(1) the extent to which the health care employer proposes to participate financially in the program;~~

~~(2) the extent of the health care employer's commitment to sustaining the program financially, including providing financial support for nurse preceptors, to create ongoing opportunities for educational advancement in nursing;~~

~~(3) the ability of the health care employer's staff to leverage nursing scholarship opportunities to maximize the reach of the grant funds;~~

~~(4) the employer's demonstrated ability to retain nursing students in the Vermont nursing workforce;~~

~~(5) the employer's geographic location, in order to ensure access to pipeline and apprenticeship programs for nursing staff across Vermont; and~~

~~(6) the employer's commitment to advancing the professional development of individuals from marginalized communities, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged in accessing educational opportunities and career advancement in the health care professions.~~

~~(c)(1) VSAC shall begin awarding grants under this section expeditiously in order to enable health care employer staff to begin enrolling in nursing school programs that commence in the fall of 2022.~~

~~(2) On or before September 15, 2022, VSAC shall provide an update to the Health Reform Oversight Committee on the status of program implementation.~~

Sec. 17. 18 V.S.A. § 34 is added to read:

§ 34. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse scholarship funds under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

(b) To be eligible for a scholarship under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall:

(1) be enrolled at an approved postsecondary education institution as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 2822;

(2) demonstrate financial need;

(3) demonstrate academic capacity by carrying the minimum grade point average in the individual's course of study prior to receiving the fund award, and

~~(4) agree to work as a nurse in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of scholarship awarded.~~

~~(c)(1) First priority for scholarship funds shall be given to students pursuing a practical nursing certificate who will be eligible to sit for the NCLEX-PN examination upon completion of the certificate.~~

~~(2) Second priority for scholarship funds shall be given to students pursuing an associate's degree in nursing who will be eligible to sit for the NCLEX-RN examination upon graduation.~~

~~(3) Third priority for scholarship funds shall be given to students pursuing a bachelor of science degree in nursing.~~

~~(4) Fourth priority shall be given to students pursuing graduate nursing education.~~

~~(d) Students attending an approved postsecondary educational institution in Vermont shall receive first preference for scholarships.~~

~~(e) There shall be no deadline to apply for a scholarship under this section. Scholarships shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be available to the Department of Health and the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional scholarships as set forth in this section.~~

~~Sec. 18. REPEAL~~

~~18 V.S.A. § 31 (educational assistance; incentives; nurses) is repealed.~~

~~Sec. 19. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION~~

~~The sum of \$3,000,000.00 in Global Commitment investment funds is appropriated to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2023 for scholarships for nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Program established in Sec. 17 of this act.~~

~~Sec. 20. 18 V.S.A. § 35 is added to read:~~

~~§ 35. VERMONT NURSING LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM~~

~~(a) As used in this section:~~

~~(1) "Corporation" means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.~~

~~(2) "Eligible individual" means an individual who satisfies the eligibility requirements for loan repayment under this section.~~

~~(3) "Eligible school" means an approved postsecondary education institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.~~

~~(4) "Loan repayment" means the cancellation and repayment of loans under this section.~~

~~(5) "Loans" means education loans guaranteed, made, financed, serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter for attendance at an eligible school.~~

~~(6) "Program" means the Vermont Nursing Loan Repayment Program created under this section.~~

~~(b) The Vermont Nursing Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who live and work as a nurse in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (e) of this section.~~

~~(c) The loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the eligible individual by the Corporation, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.~~

~~(d) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the following requirements:~~

~~(1) have graduated from an eligible school where the individual has, within the past five years, been awarded a nursing degree;~~

~~(2) had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages from the eligible school;~~

~~(3) work as a nurse in this State; and~~

~~(4) be a resident of Vermont.~~

~~(f)(1) An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for every for one year of service as a nurse in this State.~~

~~(2) The Corporation shall award loan repayments in amounts that are sufficient to attract high-quality candidates while also making a meaningful increase in Vermont's health care professional workforce.~~

~~(i) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of this section.~~

~~Sec. 21. VERMONT NURSING LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM;~~

~~APPROPRIATION~~

~~The sum of \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2023 for loan repayment for nurses under the Vermont Nursing Loan Repayment Program established in Sec. 20 of this act.~~

~~Sec. 22. 18 V.S.A. § 36 is added to read:~~

~~§ 36. NURSE EDUCATOR SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN REPAYMENT~~

~~PROGRAM~~

~~(a) Definitions. As used in this section:~~

~~(1) "Eligible individual" means an individual who satisfies the eligibility requirements under this section for a scholarship or loan repayment.~~

~~(2) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.~~

~~(3) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the federal government or from the State.~~

~~(4) “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans under this section.~~

~~(5) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed, serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter for attendance at an eligible school.~~

~~(6) “Program” means the Nurse Educator Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program created under this section.~~

~~(7) “Scholarship” means a scholarship awarded under this section covering tuition, room, board, and the cost of required books and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.~~

~~(b) Program creation. The Nurse Educator Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides scholarships to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to working as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The Program also provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who work as nurse educators~~

~~at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (e) of this section.~~

~~(c) The scholarship and loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the eligible individual by the Corporation, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.~~

~~(d) Eligibility for scholarships. To be eligible for a scholarship under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following requirements:~~

~~(1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program that leads to a graduate degree in nursing;~~

~~(2) continually demonstrate satisfactory academic progress by maintaining the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages;~~

~~(3) have used any available gift aid;~~

~~(4) have executed a contract with the Corporation committing the individual to work as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State;~~

~~(5) have executed a promissory note obligating the individual to repay the individual's scholarship benefit, in whole or in part, if the individual fails to complete the period of service required in subsection (f) of this section, and~~

~~(6) have completed the Program's application form, the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA), and the Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance with a schedule determined by the Corporation.~~

~~(e) Eligibility for loan repayment. To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the following requirements:~~

~~(1) graduated from an eligible school where the individual has, within the past five years, been awarded a graduate degree in nursing;~~

~~(2) had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages from the eligible school;~~

~~(3) work as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State; and~~

~~(4) be a resident of Vermont.~~

~~(f) Service commitment.~~

~~(1) Scholarships. For each year of service as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State, an eligible individual shall be entitled to a full academic year of full scholarship benefit under the Program. If an eligible individual fails to serve as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State for a period that would entitle the individual to the full scholarship benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation, then the individual shall reimburse the Corporation a pro rata~~

~~portion of the scholarship paid under the Program pursuant to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.~~

~~(2) Loan repayment. An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for every for one year of service as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State.~~

~~(g) Adoption of policies, procedures, and guidelines. The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of this section.~~

~~**Sec. 23. NURSE EDUCATOR SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN REPAYMENT
PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION**~~

~~The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2023 for scholarships and loan repayment for nurse educators under the Nurse Educator Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program established in Sec. 22 of this act.~~

~~**Sec. 24. NURSING SCHOOLS; SIMULATION LAB UPDATE AND
EXPANSION; APPROPRIATION**~~

~~The sum of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services in fiscal year 2023 for purposes of providing capital grants to nursing school programs to enable them to renovate or~~

~~expand their simulation laboratories, or both, in order to enable them to increase student enrollment. The amount of the grant funds shall be divided among the nursing schools in Vermont based on each school's projected nursing student enrollment following completion of the renovation or expansion.~~

Sec. 25. 18 V.S.A. § 9456 is amended to read:

§ 9456. BUDGET REVIEW

(a) The Board shall conduct reviews of each hospital's proposed budget based on the information provided pursuant to this subchapter and in accordance with a schedule established by the Board.

(b) In conjunction with budget reviews, the Board shall:

** * **

(10) require each hospital to provide information on administrative costs, as defined by the Board, including specific information on the amounts spent on marketing and advertising costs; and

(11) require each hospital to create or maintain connectivity to the State's Health Information Exchange Network in accordance with the criteria established by the Vermont Information Technology Leaders, Inc., pursuant to subsection 9352(i) of this title, provided that the Board shall not require a hospital to create a level of connectivity that the State's Exchange is unable to support.

~~(12) review the hospital's investments in workforce development initiatives, including nursing workforce pipeline collaborations with nursing schools and compensation and other support for nurse preceptors; and~~

~~(13) consider the salaries for the hospital's executive and clinical leadership and the hospital's salary spread, including a comparison of median salaries to the medians of northern New England states.~~

~~***~~

~~Sec. 26. GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; FISCAL YEAR 2023~~

~~HOSPITAL BUDGET REVIEW; NURSING WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES~~

~~For hospital fiscal year 2023, the Green Mountain Care Board may exclude all or a portion of a hospital's investments in nursing workforce development initiatives from any otherwise applicable financial limitations on the hospital's budget or budget growth. Notwithstanding any provision of GMCB Rule 3.202, the Board may modify its hospital budget guidance for hospital fiscal year 2023 as needed to comply with this section.~~

~~Sec. 27. DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES;~~

~~MEDICAID RATE INCREASE; REPORT~~

~~(a) Since the 1960s, the State and federal governments have directed the community mental health system to provide care in the community using the least restrictive means for those who would previously have been~~

~~institutionalized, but never redistributed the money to the community mental health system or fully funded that mandate. The General Assembly is taking the steps set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of this section to address the shortfall.~~

~~(b) In order to increase by 10 percent the Medicaid rates for the mental health and developmental disability services provided by designated and specialized service agencies, the sum of \$41,854,493.00 in Global Commitment dollars is appropriated to the Agency of Human Services in fiscal year 2023.~~

~~(c) The Departments of Mental Health and of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, in consultation with representatives of the designated and specialized services agencies, shall report to the House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, and on Appropriations and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Appropriations on or before January 15, 2023 with the total amount of funds that would be necessary on an annual basis to increase the salaries for all staff in the community mental health system to the level of equivalent positions in the State workforce, Vermont hospitals, and school settings.~~

~~Sec. 28. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED AND~~

~~SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT~~

~~(a) The sum of \$6,000,000.00 is appropriated to the Agency of Human Services from the General Fund in fiscal year 2023 to expand the supply of high-quality mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and developmental disability services professionals by distributing funds to the designated and specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency's proportion of full-time- equivalent (FTE) mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and developmental disability services staff to the total number of FTE mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and developmental disability services staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide. The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of high-quality mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and developmental disability services professionals available to Vermont residents in need of their services, as set forth in subsection (b) of this section.~~

~~(b)(1) Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section available to its current and prospective employees as set forth in subdivisions (A) and (B) of this~~

~~subdivision (1) on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year service obligation to provide mental health, substance use disorder treatment, or developmental disability services, or a combination of these, at a designated or specialized service agency in this State. The funds may be used for the following purposes:~~

~~(A) loan repayment for master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct service staff, and nurses; and~~

~~(B) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees to become master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct service staff, and nurses.~~

~~(2) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to the current and prospective employees of designated and specialized service agencies in the form of forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the employee's completion of the required service obligation.~~

~~(c) Until the funds have been fully expended, the Agency of Human Services shall report on or before January 15 annually to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare with information on the following:~~

~~(1) the specific designated and specialized service agencies that have received funds to date and the programs within each of those agencies in which the financial assistance recipients will deliver services,~~

~~(2) the amount of financial assistance funding provided to each recipient;~~

~~(3) the specific degrees or certificates toward which the tuition assistance recipients are working and those earned by loan repayment recipients; and~~

~~(4) the number of new employees attracted to the designated and specialized service agencies as a result of the financial assistance, their fields of study, and the programs in which they deliver services.~~

~~Sec. 29. OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; BARRIERS TO
MENTAL HEALTH LICENSURE; REPORT~~

~~The Office of Professional Regulation shall undertake a systematic review of the licensing processes for mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals to identify barriers to licensure. On or before January 15, 2023, the Office shall provide its findings and recommendations to address any identified barriers to licensure to the House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, on Commerce and Economic Development, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and on Government Operations.~~

~~Sec. 30. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;~~

~~APPROPRIATION~~

~~(a) One classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce Coordinator position is created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care Reform in fiscal year 2023 to support the health care workforce initiatives set forth in this act and in the Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan. The Coordinator shall focus on building educational, clinical, and housing partnerships and support structures to increase and improve health care workforce training, recruitment, and retention.~~

~~(b) The sum of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care Reform in fiscal year 2023 for the Health Care Workforce Coordinator position, of which \$120,000.00 is for personal services and \$50,000.00 is for operating expenses.~~

~~Sec. 31. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE~~

~~DATA HUB; HEALTH RESOURCE ALLOCATION PLAN~~

~~The sum of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated to the Department of Labor from the General Fund in fiscal year 2023 to enable the Department to serve as the State's health care workforce data hub. The Department shall collect health care workforce data and identify and propose solutions to address data gaps, and shall share the data with the Green Mountain Care Board to inform the Board's work in identifying the State's health resources available to meet~~

~~Vermonters' health care needs and additional resources that may be necessary as part of the Board's Health Resource Allocation Plan responsibilities pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9405. The Department shall use existing statewide information to the extent practicable to avoid imposing administrative burdens on health care providers and to avoid duplication of efforts underway elsewhere in Vermont. The Department shall expand its data collection practices over two years to include all levels of the health care workforce, beginning with the highest-level licensed health care professionals.~~

~~Sec. 32. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE~~

~~BOARD; SUPPLY AND DEMAND MODELING~~

~~On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Green Mountain Care Board, shall explore and recommend to the House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, and on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs a process, methodology, and necessary funding amounts to establish and maintain the capacity to perform health care supply and demand modeling based on information in the health care workforce data hub, for use by health care employers, health care educators, and policymakers.~~

~~Sec. 33. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL REGULATION; GREEN~~

~~MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS;~~

~~ADMINISTRATIVE COST REDUCTION; REPORT~~

~~*(a) The Department of Financial Regulation shall explore the feasibility of requiring health insurers and their prior authorization vendors to access clinical data from the Vermont Health Information Exchange whenever possible to support prior authorization requests in situations in which a request cannot be automatically approved.*~~

~~*(b) The Department of Financial Regulation shall direct health insurers to provide prior authorization information to the Department in a format required by the Department in order to enable the Department to analyze opportunities to align and streamline prior authorization request processes. The Department shall share its findings and recommendations with the Green Mountain Care Board, and the Department and the Board shall collaborate to provide recommendations to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance on or before January 15, 2023 regarding the statutory changes necessary to align and streamline prior authorization processes and requirements across health insurers.*~~

Sec. 24. 23 V.S.A. § 3543 is amended to read:

§ 3543. STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE

(a)(1) There is established a need-based student loan repayment assistance program for the purpose of providing student loan repayment assistance to any individual employed by a regulated, privately operated center-based child care program or family child care home.

(2) An eligible individual shall:

(A) work in a privately operated center-based child care program or in a family child care home that is regulated by the Division for at least an average of 30 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year, except that this minimum time requirement does not apply to an employee of Vermont Head Start to the extent it conflicts with any law or contract provision governing the terms of employment.

(B) receive an annual salary of not more than \$50,000.00; and

(C) have earned an associates or bachelor's degree with a major concentration in early childhood, child and human development, elementary education, special education with a birth to age eight focus, or child and family services within the preceding five years.

~~Sec. 35. PILOT PROGRAM; POSITIONS EMBEDDED WITHIN~~

~~RECOVERY CENTERS~~

~~(a)(1) In fiscal year 2023, \$1,290,000.00 is appropriated to the Department for Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living's Division of Vocation Rehabilitation and the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation from the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund for the purpose of developing and implementing a two-year pilot program that embeds 15 FTE new positions within 12 recovery centers across the State.~~

~~(2) The 15 FTE limited-service positions shall be allocated as follows:~~

~~(A) Of the total appropriation, \$540,000.00 total shall be allocated in equal amounts to fund the following 2.5 FTE at each of two geographically diverse recovery centers:~~

~~(i) one FTE to serve as an employment counselor within the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation;~~

~~(ii) one FTE to serve as an employment consultant within the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation; and~~

~~(iii) 0.5 FTE to serve as Employment Assistance Program staff within the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation.~~

~~(B) Of the total appropriation, \$75,000.00 shall be allocated in equal amounts to fund one FTE who shall serve as an employment support counselor at each of the 10 remaining recovery centers in the State.~~

~~(b) On or before January 1, 2024, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation, shall submit a report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Health and Welfare summarizing the effectiveness of the pilot program, including:~~

- ~~(1) educational attainment and achievement of program recipients;~~
- ~~(2) acquisition of a credential of value pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 546;~~
- ~~(3) number of job placements; and~~
- ~~(4) job retention rates.~~

~~Sec. 36. ADVANCE VERMONT PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP~~

~~(a) Duties. Advance Vermont shall perform the following duties, in coordination and alignment with State partners, in support of the State's goal articulated in 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters hold a credential of value by 2025 (Goal):~~

- ~~(1) increase public awareness of the value of postsecondary education and training to help persons of any age make informed decisions about the value of education and training that would further their advancement in educational pathways and pursuit of career goals, through targeted outreach as outlined in subsection (b) of this section,~~

~~(2) promote a broad understanding of the public good and value in achieving the State's Goal and of actions stakeholders can take to increase attainment;~~

~~(3) assist or coordinate with stakeholders, such as educational, business, governmental, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, in activities that seek to align the delivery of high-quality education and training opportunities with career advancement and support the policy priorities outlined in 10 V.S.A. § 546;~~

~~(4) collect and display publicly available, nonconfidential information about postsecondary credentials available to Vermonters;~~

~~(5) facilitate conversations or provide information about the national best practices in aligning, recognizing, measuring, tracking, and promoting postsecondary credentials of value to the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education when requested;~~

~~(6) maintain its web-based resources that provide information about opportunities to obtain a postsecondary credential of value, in coordination with State partners;~~

~~(7) support the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education transition or integration of Advance Vermont's web-based resources and collected information referenced in subdivisions (4) and (6) of this subsection into a State-supported system in a coordinated way, and~~

~~(8) meet on a quarterly basis with the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education about activities described in this subsection.~~

~~(b) Outreach. Advance Vermont may use funds awarded by the State to:~~

~~(1) create and distribute public-facing communications and resources related to the duties described in this section; and~~

~~(2) offer support to career and education counselors, employment and training counselors, jobseekers and their families, and other stakeholders, consistent with best practice and State policy and programs, to help them better understand the postsecondary education and training landscape.~~

~~(c) Reports. Advance Vermont shall provide written reports to:~~

~~(1) the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education about anticipated work and activities using a simplified reporting template jointly developed by Advance Vermont and the State entities on a quarterly basis; and~~

~~(2) on or before December 15, 2022, the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction regarding the use of funds, activities performed, and outcomes achieved by Advance Vermont.~~

~~(d) Appropriation. The sum of \$350,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year 2023 to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the purposes of funding the work outlined in this section by Advance Vermont.~~

~~Sec. 57. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM,~~

APPROPRIATION

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$3,200,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to be granted to the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to continue the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program with other community partners, providing the Corps and its partners with the capital and operating funds necessary to support workforce development goals through creating meaningful paid service and learning opportunities for young adults.

Sec. 38. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) Adult education and literacy services are a key piece of the workforce development system and serve as the entryway into career readiness and workforce development for tens of thousands of our most vulnerable Vermonters, those with low literacy, under-education, or those simply in need of increased skills so that they can succeed.

(2) 36,000 adults in Vermont do not have a high school credential, and tens of thousands more lack the skills to matriculate into and be successful in college, in career training programs, or both. Adult education and literacy providers are the first stop on the path to the transformative opportunities that Vermont is offering for these individuals.

~~(3) Adult education and literacy services help people build the assets they need to move out of poverty successfully, as well as the confidence to continue to move toward success throughout their lives. Students are supported to identify concrete goals and then break those goals down into steps. Students set goals in the domains of:~~

~~(A) family and life;~~

~~(B) academics; and~~

~~(C) career and college readiness.~~

Sec. 39. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022, except that:

(1) Sec. 8a(b)–(c) (Internship Cost Offset Initiative) shall take effect on passage.

(2) Sec. 25 (18 V.S.A. § 9456) shall take effect on January 1, 2023 and shall apply to hospital fiscal years 2024 and after.

Sec. 1. IMMEDIATE STRATEGIES AND FUNDING FOR EXPANDING

THE LABOR FORCE; INCREASING THE NUMBER OF

PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPATION RATES;

APPROPRIATIONS

(a) In fiscal year 2023, the following amounts are appropriated from the General Fund to the following recipients for the purposes specified:

(1) \$2,500,000.00 to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement, in consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, to administer a statewide forgivable loan program of \$5,000.00 per graduate for recent college graduates across all Vermont higher education institutions who commit to work in Vermont for two years after graduation.

(2) \$387,000.00 to Vermont Technical College to develop a skilled meat cutter training and apprenticeship facility.

(b) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Agency of Human Services to provide grants, which may be administered through a performance-based contract, to refugee- or New American-focused programs working in Vermont to support increased in-migration or retention of recent arrivals.

Sec. 2. CTE FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE; FINDINGS

(a) Vermont's career and technical education (CTE) system is critical to ensuring that all Vermonters have access to the high-quality resources they need to explore a wide variety of career pathways, earn a postsecondary credential of value, and establish a productive career.

(b) CTE is a vital component of our educational system, supporting and delivering on the goals established by the General Assembly in 2013 Acts and Resolves No. 77 (flexible pathways), 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189

(workforce development), and in achieving our attainment goal, which is that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters have a credential of value by 2025 (10 V.S.A. § 546).

(c) CTE is also an equity lever, providing every student access to critical workforce training, postsecondary coursework, and the real-world skills and networks that prepare our youth to continue to earn and learn during and after high school.

(d) As of the fall semester of the 2021–2022 school year, students were enrolling in CTE programs at a higher rate than at the beginning of the pandemic, increasing from 4,160 to 4,565. In the 2020–2021 school year, Vermont’s CTE system awarded Tier II credentials of value to 459 students.

(e) Since 2015, through legislative initiatives such as 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 51, 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 69, 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189, 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 80, and most recently 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, the General Assembly and other stakeholders in education and in State government have been working to identify, understand, and resolve long-standing concerns related to the functioning of the CTE system.

(f) In 2018, the Agency of Education embarked on a collaborative process that included students, legislators, and communities across the State to develop a strategic vision and aspirational goals to help guide the transformation of the CTE system.

(g) The State Board of Education adopted the Agency of Education’s vision and goals for CTE that “all Vermont learners attain their postsecondary goals by having access to career and technical education systems that are equitable, efficient, integrated and collaborative.”

(h) 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189 committed Vermont to a redesign of its workforce development and training system, including the approval of up to four pilot sites or projects to examine the way our CTE system is funded and governed.

(i) In a report dated June 14, 2021, the Agency of Education reported on its progress, which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report presented possible alternatives to our current funding structure, which is widely seen as a barrier to enrollment. However, these alternatives were based on an examination of only the CTE school district funding model and did not include the study of governance models. The report recommended completing this study of CTE funding and governance models to propose actionable implementation steps for the State.

(j) The Agency of Education’s State plan for federal Perkins funds is aligned to the vision and goals created through collaborative processes that included a public comment period. Processes required in the federal legislation like the biennial Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment will

strengthen the role of CTE in each region and help to focus the use of limited federal funds to improve the system.

*Sec. 3. FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES OF
CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN VERMONT*

(a) There is appropriated to the Joint Fiscal Office for fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$180,000.00 from the General Fund to contract for services to:

(1) complete a systematic examination of the existing funding structures of career technical education (CTE) in Vermont and how these structures impede or promote the State's educational and workforce development goals;

(2) examine CTE governance structures in relationship to those funding structures;

(3) examine the implications of the existing funding and governance structures for kindergarten through grade 12 schools and adult education;

(4) examine the funding and alignment of early college and dual enrollment;

(5) consider the CTE funding and governance structures in other states in relation to Vermont's unique system of funding education; and

(6) identify and prioritize potential new models of CTE funding and governance structures to reduce barriers to enrollment and to improve the quality, duration, impact, and access to CTE statewide.

(b) In performing its work, the contractor shall consult with the consultant and any other stakeholders involved in completing the report on the design, implementation, and costs of an integrated and coherent adult basic education, adult secondary education, and postsecondary career and technical education system pursuant to 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.3.

(c) On or before March 1, 2023, the Joint Fiscal Office shall issue a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance on the work performed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

(d)(1) The Agency of Education shall consider the work performed and report issued pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and shall develop an implementation plan, including recommended steps to design and implement new funding and governance models.

(2) On or before July 1, 2023, the Agency shall issue a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance that describes the results of

its work under this subsection and the implementation plan and makes recommendations for legislative action.

Sec. 4. INVESTMENT IN THE UP-SKILLING OF PRIVATE SECTOR

*EMPLOYERS TO SUPPORT THE EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS
AND ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS; APPROPRIATIONS*

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a performance-based contract to provide statewide delivery of business coaching and other forms of training to BIPOC business owners, networking and special convenings, and career fairs, workshops and paid internships, career guidance, and other support for BIPOC workers across the State.

Sec. 5. REGIONAL WORKFORCE EXPANSION SYSTEM

(a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

(1) Vermont is experiencing an acute labor shortage in 2022.

(2) According to the Employment and Labor Marketing Information

Division of the Vermont Department of Labor:

(A) There are approximately 28,000 job openings in Vermont as of December 2021.

(B) 9,945 individuals meet the federal statistical definition of unemployed as of January 2022.

(C) 4,500 individuals are receiving unemployment insurance assistance as of March 2022.

(D) The workforce has shrunk by 26,000 individuals from 2019 to 2022, yet the unemployment rate is just three percent as of January 2022.

(E) The workforce participation rate has fallen from 66 percent to 60.6 percent.

(3) The Department receives approximately 80 percent of its funding from federal sources, which constrains the Department and its employees from adjusting its work to meet immediate needs.

(4) The federal funding for field staff in the Workforce Development Division has declined significantly over the past 20 years, supporting 75 persons in 2022 as compared to 135 in 2003.

(5) Though Vermont has a small population, the unique characteristics of its region's employers, educational institutions, demographics, and socioeconomic conditions make it best to address efforts to connect individuals with training and job placement on a regional basis.

(b) Regional Workforce Expansion System. The amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor for a two-year pilot program to launch and lead a coordinated regional system, beginning in three regions of the State, to work toward accomplishing the following goals:

(1) increase local labor participation rate;

(2) decrease the number of open positions reported by local employers;

(3) increase the wages of workers as they transition to new jobs; and

(4) collect, organize, develop, and share information related to local career pathways with workforce development partners.

(c) Duties. In order to meet the goals specified in subsection (b) of this section, the Department shall:

(1) create new capacity to address and support State activities related to workforce development, expansion, and alignment;

(2) focus on the overarching goal of helping workers find jobs and employers find workers;

(3) support employers in communicating and tailoring their work requirements, conditions, and expectations to better access local workers; and

(4) collaborate with local education and training providers and regional workforce partners to create and regularly distribute data related to local labor force supply and demand.

(d) System infrastructure. The Department shall make investments that improve and expand regional capacity to strengthen networks who assist jobseekers, workers, and employers in connecting.

(1) The Department is authorized to create four classified, two-year limited-service positions, with funding allocated to perform the work described

in this section, who shall report to the Workforce Development Division and of whom:

(A) three shall be Workforce Expansion Specialists assigned, one each, to three different regions of the State; and

(B) one shall provide oversight and State-level coordination of activities.

(2)(A) The Department shall use funds allocated to develop systems for coordination, information sharing, and enhanced support to regional partners, host regional meetings, develop regional plans, and provide localized resources including labor market information, training and development opportunities, and support services.

(B) The Department shall develop labor market information reports to support discussion and decision making that will address local labor market challenges and opportunities and support a regional approach to solving local or unique labor supply challenges.

(e) Coordination.

(1) The Department shall convene regional meetings of education, training, business, and service provider partners; coordinate local workforce information collection and distribution; and assist in developing localized career resources, such as information for career counseling, local job fairs, and career expos, that will be available to a wide range of stakeholders.

(2) Service provider partners shall include community partners who directly serve mature workers, youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been involved with the correction system, BIPOC Vermonters, New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations in efforts to align service delivery, share information, and achieve greater employment outcomes for Vermonters.

(f) Interim report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Department shall provide a narrative update on the progress made in hiring staff, establishing interagency agreements, developing regional information exchange systems, and supporting State-level work to expand the labor force to the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction.

(g) Implementation. The Department of Labor shall begin implementing the Regional Workforce Expansion System on or before July 1, 2022.

Sec. 6. INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS; WORKFORCE

DEVELOPMENT; PILOT PROGRAM

(a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to facilitate the education and vocational training of incarcerated individuals so that they have a greater likelihood of obtaining gainful employment and positively contributing to society upon reintegration into the community.

(b) Policy; appropriations.

(1)(A) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$420,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections, in consultation with the Vermont Department of Labor, to address education and vocational enhancement needs. These funds shall not be allocated from any amounts budgeted for Justice Reinvestment II initiatives.

(B) The Department shall use the funds allocated for the development of education and vocational training for incarcerated individuals residing in a Vermont correctional facility prior to community reintegration. The Department may allocate the funds over three years, consistent with the following:

(i) \$270,000.00 for transition development, including equipment and mobile labs in one or more sites;

(ii) \$100,000.00 for training partner support; and

(iii) \$50,000.00 for curriculum development.

(2) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections, which may be allocated over not more than three years, to establish a community-based pilot reentry program at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility in consultation with the Vermont Department of Labor. The Department of Corrections shall designate a service provider to administer the pilot program's goals to:

(A) provide continuity of services for incarcerated individuals;

(B) expand current employment readiness programs within the facility by building pathways for coordinated transition to employment;

(C) focus on the first six months after individuals are released from the facility;

(D) coordinate with local community resources, parole and probation offices, and other supports to ensure successful transition into the community;

(E) assist individuals in successfully transitioning into new jobs; and

(F) work with employers to support successful hiring and best practices to support incarcerated individuals.

(c) Report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Corrections shall create and submit a report on workforce and education training programs in correctional facilities to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee; the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Commerce and Economic Development; and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Judiciary. The report shall:

(1) identify program design, logistical needs, and policy changes to current Department of Corrections facility-based training and educational programs necessary to successfully enable incarcerated individuals' reintegration into their communities, including changes to programs that

enhance individuals' skill development, knowledge, and other support needed to qualify for and secure a position in a critical occupation in Vermont;

(2) identify disparities of outcomes and recommend solutions for incarcerated Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color concerning facility-based training, educational programming, and successful community reintegration;

(3) provide an update on the Department of Corrections' use of education and vocational enhancement funding in fiscal year 2023;

(4) provide recommendations on what aspects of the pilot program should be replicated in other correctional facilities in Vermont; and

(5) provide recommended legislation for the continuation of the pilot program or any changes.

Sec. 7. INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to improve the recruitment and retention of correctional officers to ensure adequate staffing and safe working conditions in facilities operated by the Department of Corrections.

Sec. 8. IMPROVEMENT OF CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION; REPORT

(a) On or before January 15, 2023, the Secretary of Human Services, in consultation with the Commissioners of Corrections and of Human Resources, shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations, on

Commerce and Economic Development, on Corrections and Institutions, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Government Operations, and on Judiciary identifying conditions that pose an obstacle to the successful recruitment and retention of correctional officers and setting forth a plan to improve the recruitment and retention of correctional officers.

(b)(1) The report shall specifically analyze the impact of the following on the recruitment and retention of correctional officers:

(A) wages and benefits;

(B) terms and conditions of employment;

(C) working conditions in Department of Corrections facilities, including health and safety issues and the physical condition of the facilities; and

(D) staffing levels and overtime.

(2) The report shall, for each of the issues examined pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, analyze how the following states compare to Vermont and shall identify any best practices in those states that could improve recruitment and retention of correctional officers in Vermont:

(A) Maine;

(B) New Hampshire;

(C) New York;

(D) Massachusetts;

(E) Rhode Island; and

(F) Connecticut.

(c) The report shall, as part of the plan to improve the recruitment and retention of correctional officers, identify specific administrative and legislative actions that are necessary to successfully improve the recruitment and retention of correctional officers.

Sec. 9. ASSESSMENT OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

INITIATIVES; REPORT

(a) On or before January 15, 2023, the Secretary of Human Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Human Resources, shall submit to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations a report regarding the use of funds appropriated pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves, No. 83:

(1) Sec. 14 for employee recruitment and retention at:

(A) the secure residential recovery facility; and

(B) the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital;

(2) Sec. 68 for employee retention with respect to:

(A) the Department of Corrections; and

(B) the Vermont Veteran's Home; and

(3) Sec. 72 for workforce recruitment and retention incentives with respect to designated and specialized service agencies, including shared living providers.

(b) The report shall assess how effective the appropriations identified pursuant to subsection (a) of this section were in addressing issues related to employee recruitment and retention; identify any ongoing or remaining employee recruitment and retention challenges that the recipients have; and identify any potential legislative, administrative, or programmatic changes that can address those ongoing or remaining employee retention issues.

(c) The report shall also include a recommendation as to whether and how to appropriate additional funds in the 2023 Budget Adjustment Act to address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges at:

(1) the Vermont Veteran's Home;

(2) the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital;

(3) the secure residential recovery facility;

(4) designated and specialized service agencies; and

(5) the Department of Corrections' facilities with respect to individuals employed as a Correctional Officer I or a Correctional Officer II.

Sec. 10. REPEALS

10 V.S.A. §§ 544 and 545 are repealed.

Sec. 11. 10 V.S.A. § 547 is added to read:

§ 547. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM

(a) Vermont Work-Based Learning and Training Program. The Department of Labor shall develop the statewide Work-Based Learning and Training Program that serves transitioning secondary and postsecondary students and Vermonters seeking work-based experience as part of a career experience or change and is designed to:

(1) support Vermonters who are graduating from postsecondary education or a secondary CTE program or who are pursuing a career change with a paid on-the-job work experience lasting 12 weeks or fewer;

(2) establish a statewide platform available to all employers to list their internships, returnships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship opportunities and for jobseekers to view and access information about specific opportunities; and

(3) support employers by providing them with assistance in developing and implementing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities.

(b) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Internship” means a work-based learning experience with an employer where the participant may, but does not necessarily, receive academic credit.

(2) “Returnship” means an on-the-job learning experience for an individual who is returning to the workforce after an extended absence or is seeking a limited-duration on-the-job work experience in a different occupation or occupational setting as part of a career change.

(c) Activities. The Department may use funds appropriated to it for the Program to:

(1) build and administer the Program;

(2) develop an online platform that will connect students and jobseekers with work-based learning and training opportunities within Vermont;

(3) support work-based learning and training opportunities with public and private employers available to prospective workers located in or relocating to Vermont;

(4) promote work-based learning and training as a valuable component of a talent pipeline; and

(5) assist employers in developing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities.

(d) Data. The Department shall collect the following data:

(1) the total number of participants served;

(2) the number of participants who received wage assistance or other financial assistance as part of this Program and their employment status one year after completion;

(3) the average wage of participants in subdivision (2) of this subsection at the start of the Program and the average wage of participants one year after completion;

(4) the number of work-based learning or training opportunities listed on the platform; and

(5) the number of employers who offered a work-based learning or training opportunity.

(e) State participation. The Department shall engage appropriate State agencies and departments to expand Program opportunities with State government and with entities awarded State contracts.

(f) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report Program data to the relevant committees of jurisdiction.

Sec. 12. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM;

APPROPRIATION

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor to implement the Vermont Work-Based Learning and Training Program created in Sec. 11 of this act.

Sec. 13. SECONDARY STUDENT INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED

CREDENTIAL PILOT PROJECT

(a) Pilot Project creation. The Department of Labor, in consultation with the Agency of Education, shall design and implement the Secondary Student

Industry-Recognized Credential Pilot Project to provide funding for an eligible secondary student to take an eligible adult career and technical education course.

(b) Eligible courses. A course is eligible for the Pilot Project if it is:

(1) offered at a regional CTE center, as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 1522(4), and qualifies as adult career technical education or postsecondary career technical education, as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 1522(11) and (12);

(2) offered during the summer, evening or weekend while secondary school is in session or during the summer; and

(3) included as an element of the student's personalized learning plan and reasonably related to the student's career goals.

(c) Eligible student. A student is eligible for the Pilot Project if:

(1) the student is a Vermont resident attending a Vermont public school or an independent secondary school that is eligible for public funding;

(2) the student has completed grade 11 and has not received a high school diploma; and

(3) the student's secondary school and the regional CTE center determine that the student:

(A) is prepared to succeed in the course;

(B) meets the prerequisites for the course; and

(C) has exhausted other sources of available funding prior to submitting an application.

(d) Administration.

(1) Not later than 30 days after the effective date of this section, the Department of Labor, in consultation with the Agency of Education, shall develop and make available an application for funding that includes:

(A) student's enrollment status;

(B) course information;

(C) a copy of the student's personalized learning plan;

(D) attestation that the secondary and adult career technical education programs find the program of study appropriate for the student;

(E) description of federal and local funding sources that were explored but insufficient or unavailable for use by the student; and

(F) other information the Department requires to determine eligibility.

(2) A student's secondary school shall timely complete and submit an application to the Department of Labor on behalf of the student.

(3) The Department of Labor shall:

(A) review the application and, if appropriate, meet with the student to determine eligibility for existing federal and State programs, including

WIOA Title I Youth (in-school) and the Vermont Youth Employment Program;
and

(B) provide a copy of the application to the Agency of Education,
which shall determine whether Agency funding is available and notify the
Department of its determination within 10 business days.

(4) The Department shall provide funding for the tuition cost for one
course to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis:

(A) from State or federal sources that are available through the
Department or Agency; or

(B) if funding is unavailable from those sources, from the amounts
available in the Department's fiscal year 2023 budget, not to exceed
\$100,000.00.

(5) For students who meet annual low-income qualifications under the
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Department may provide funds
to purchase books, supplies, exam fees, and equipment.

(6) A regional CTE center shall not receive more than \$20,000.00
through the program in each fiscal year.

(e) Regional CTE center report. The Department of Labor shall require a
report from each regional CTE center providing information to support the
Department's reporting requirements in subsections (f) and (g) of this section.

(f) Interim Report. The Department of Labor and Agency of Education shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on or before the January 15, 2023 regarding the use of funds, including data relating to student circumstances, levels of participation, and how local school districts are able or unable to meet the career preparation and training needs of secondary students using the program.

(g) Final Report. The Department of Labor and Agency of Education shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance within 45 days following the end of the fiscal year or exhaustion of funds, whichever comes first, regarding the use of funds, including data relating to the number of participants, student circumstances, levels of participation, what certifications were issued, how local school districts are able or unable to meet the career preparation and training needs of secondary students using the program, and recommendations on how to address gaps in access and funding for secondary students seeking professional certifications not offered through the secondary education system.

Sec. 14. THE VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Trades Scholarship Program is created and shall be administered by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse initial licensing fees, exam fees, and tuition payments under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

(b) To be eligible for a scholarship under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall:

(1) be enrolled in an industry recognized training and certification program that leads to initial employment or career advancement in a building, mechanical, industrial, or medical trade, or in clean energy, energy efficiency, weatherization, or clean transportation;

(2) demonstrate financial need;

(3) register with the Vermont Department of Labor for the purpose of receiving relevant job referrals, if unemployed; and

(4) agree to work in their profession in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure or certification completion for each year of scholarship awarded.

(c)(1) The Corporation shall give preference to students attending a Vermont-based training program or, if one isn't available for their

certification, an offer of employment or promotion from a Vermont employer upon completion.

(2) The Corporation shall give priority to applicants who have not received other assistance.

(d) There shall be no deadline to apply for a scholarship under this section. Scholarships shall be awarded on a rolling basis if funds are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be available to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional scholarships as set forth in this section.

(e) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for scholarships for trades students under the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program.

Sec. 15. THE VERMONT TRADES LOAN REIMBURSEMENT

PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Trades Loan Repayment Reimbursement Program is created and shall be administered by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse funds under the Program to eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

(b) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual, shall:

(1) be a Vermont resident; and

(2) be employed in an occupation in the building, mechanical, industrial, or medical trades, or in the clean energy, energy efficiency, weatherization, or clean transportation sectors, for an average of at least 30 hours per week for least one full calendar year before applying.

(c) For every year of work in a qualifying occupation, an individual shall be eligible for up to \$5,000.00 in loan repayment reimbursement. Reimbursements shall not exceed the total amount of educational debt owed.

(d) There shall be no deadline to apply for loan repayment reimbursement under this section. Loan repayment shall be awarded on a rolling basis if funds are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be available to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional loan repayment as set forth in this section.

(e) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for loan repayment for trades professionals under the Program.

Sec. 16. CTE CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION

*EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAM; REVOLVING LOAN
FUND*

(a) Purpose. This section authorizes and provides funding for the CTE Construction and Rehabilitation Experiential Learning Program and Revolving Loan Fund, the purposes of which are to:

(1) expand the experiential and educational opportunities for high school and adult CTE students to work directly on construction projects;

(2) build community partnerships among CTE centers, housing organizations, government, and private businesses;

(3) beautify communities and rehabilitate buildings that are underperforming assets;

(4) expand housing access to Vermonters in communities throughout the State; and

(5) improve property values while teaching high school and adult students trade skills.

(b) Appropriation; creation of fund; administration.

(1) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$15,000,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to create and administer the CTE Construction and Rehabilitation Experiential Learning Program and Revolving Loan Fund pursuant to this section.

(2) The Board may use not more than five percent of the Fund for its costs of administration.

(c) Proposals; applications; funding.

(1) A regional CTE center, working in collaboration with one or more housing and community partners, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, or municipalities, shall identify construction projects that would be relevant and appropriate for CTE students enrolled in construction, electrical, plumbing, design, business management, or other CTE programs, including:

(A) rehabilitation of residential properties that are blighted or not code-compliant;

(B) new residential construction projects or improvements to land in cases of critical community need; and

(C) commercial construction projects that have substantial community benefit.

(2) Prior to or during the application process, a CTE center and its partners may consult with the Board to identify and consider potential funding partners to leverage amounts available through the Fund.

(3) A CTE center and its partners shall apply to the Board for funding by submitting a project application that includes the information required by the Board and addresses the following:

(A) the educational benefits for students and fit with the CTE curriculum;

(B) the community benefits for the neighborhood, municipality, or region in which the project is located; and

(C) the partners with whom the CTE center is collaborating and the respective responsibility for the aspects of a project, including:

(i) educational instruction and academic credit;

(ii) project management;

(iii) insurance coverage for students and the property;

(iv) compensation and benefits, including compliance with labor laws, standards, and practices; and

(v) property acquisition, ownership, and transfer.

(4) A CTE center may use funding for, and shall specify in its application the allocation of costs associated with:

(A) acquisition, design, permitting, construction, marketing, and other building-related expenses; and

(B) costs for labor, including for student wages and for instructor compensation during the academic year as well as for summer or other work that is not otherwise budgeted during the academic year.

(d) Eligibility; review; approval. The Board may approve an application that includes the information required by subsection (c) of this section and provide funding for a project that meets the following eligibility criteria:

(1) The project involves the rehabilitation of blighted or otherwise noncode compliant property, or new residential construction projects or improvements to land in cases of critical need, and results in a building with not more than four residential dwelling units.

(2) The project includes a weatherization component.

(3) Students working on the project receive academic credit, a competitive wage, or both.

(e) Affordability; flexibility. If appropriate in the circumstances, the Board may condition funding for a project on the inclusion of one or mechanisms addressing the affordability of the property upon rent or sale.

(f) Funding; proceeds; revolving loans.

(1) The Board shall provide funding for projects from the amounts available in the Fund in the form of zero-interest loans, in an amount, for a period, and upon terms specified by the Board.

(2) The Board shall return to the Fund any proceeds realized to provide funding for future projects.

(g) Report. The Board shall address the implementation of this section in its annual report to the General Assembly.

Sec. 17. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION; FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) while child care is an essential component of Vermont's economy, research has shown that three out of five of Vermont's youngest children do not have access to the child care needed by their families;

(2) according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, early childhood educators are the lowest-paid college graduates of any degree program in the country;

(3) the Council for a Strong America found in a national economic impact study that the U.S. economy loses \$57 billion annually due to child care challenges;

(4) the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that high-quality child care is a powerful two-generation workforce development strategy that strengthens today's workforce and puts children on the path to develop well and enter kindergarten ready to thrive in school, work, and life;

(5) the Vermont Early Care and Learning Dividend Study found that increased investment in early care and education, as described in the recommendations of Vermont's Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High-Quality Affordable Child Care, would yield \$3.08 for every additional dollar invested into the system;

(6) 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 45 established goals that no Vermont family spend more than 10 percent of its income on child care and that early childhood educators receive compensation commensurate with their peers in similar fields as informed by a systems analysis and financing study;

(7) while the State works toward achieving these goals, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated already pressing challenges, making it even harder for families to find affordable high-quality child care and more difficult for early childhood education programs to find and retain qualified educators;
and

(8) according to a recent study by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 71 percent of center-based child care programs in Vermont reported experiencing a staffing shortage.

Sec. 18. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that immediate action is necessary to support Vermont's economy; ensure that all families with young children have access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education; and ensure that Vermont's early childhood educators, the backbone of our economy, are well supported.

Sec. 19. HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

(a) The General Assembly values all health care workers, at every level and in each component of the health care system. The General Assembly also

acknowledges the many struggles faced by health care workers and that the pandemic has placed further strain on an already taxed system. Many health care workers have not had their pay adjusted over time to address increases in the cost of living, essentially amounting to pay cuts from year to year. Health care workers have experienced burnout, trauma, and moral injuries due to a history of underfunding and the present stress of the pandemic.

(b) In order to retain and recruit health care workers in Vermont, it is the intent of the General Assembly to invest in multiple solutions aimed at reinforcing our health care workforce in the present and sustaining our health care workers into the future.

*Sec. 20. EMERGENCY GRANTS TO SUPPORT ~~NURSE EDUCATORS~~
NURSE FACULTY AND STAFF*

(a) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Department of Health and shall carry forward for the purpose of providing emergency interim grants to Vermont’s nursing schools over three years to increase the compensation for their nurse faculty and staff, with \$1,000,000.00 to be distributed in each of fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025 to increase the compensation for each full-time-equivalent (FTE) member of the clinical and didactic nurse faculty and staff. The Department shall distribute the funds among the nursing schools in Vermont equitably based on each

school's proportion of nursing faculty and staff to the total number of FTE nursing faculty and staff across all nursing schools statewide.

(b) If the nurse faculty or staff, or both, of a nursing school receiving a grant under this section are subject to a collective bargaining agreement, the use of the grant funds provided to the nursing school for those faculty or staff, or both, shall be subject to impact bargaining between the nursing school and the collective bargaining representative of the nurse faculty or staff, or both, to the extent required by the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Sec. 21. NURSE PRECEPTOR INCENTIVE GRANTS; HOSPITALS;

WORKING GROUP; REPORT

(a)(1) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to provide incentive grants to hospital-employed nurses in Vermont to serve as preceptors for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing school programs. The Agency shall distribute the funds to hospitals employing nurses who provide student preceptor supervision based on the number of preceptor hours to be provided, at a rate of \$5.00 per preceptor hour; or a lesser hourly rate if the need exceeds the available funds.

(2) If nurse preceptors receiving compensation pursuant to a grant awarded to a hospital under this section are subject to a collective bargaining agreement, the use of the grant funds provided to the hospital for the nurse

preceptors shall be subject to impact bargaining between the hospital and the collective bargaining representative of the nurses to the extent required by the collective bargaining agreement.

(b)(1) The Director of Health Care Reform or designee in the Agency of Human Services shall convene a working group of stakeholders representing nursing schools, long-term care facilities, designated and specialized service agencies, federally qualified health centers, home health agencies, primary care practices, and other health care facilities to:

(A) identify ways to increase clinical placement opportunities across a variety of health care settings for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing school programs;

(B) establish sustainable funding models for compensating nurses serving as preceptors or for supporting the hiring of additional nurses to alleviate the pressures on nurse preceptors, or both; and

(C) develop an action plan for implementing the clinical placement expansion and sustainable funding models identified and established pursuant to subdivisions (A) and (B) of this subdivision (1), including addressing the need for student housing opportunities.

(2) On or before January 15, 2023, the Director of Health Care Reform shall provide the working group's action plan and any recommendations for legislative action to the House Committees on Health Care, on Commerce and

Economic Development, and on Appropriations and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and on Appropriations.

*Sec. 22. HEALTH CARE EMPLOYER NURSING PIPELINE AND
APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM*

(a) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation and shall carry forward for the purpose of providing grants to health care employers, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, designated and specialized service agencies, federally qualified health centers, and other health care providers, to establish or expand partnerships with Vermont nursing schools to create nursing pipeline or apprenticeship programs, or both, that will train members of the health care employers' existing staff, including personal care attendants, licensed nursing assistants, and licensed practical nurses, to become higher-level nursing professionals. Through a combination of scholarship awards, grants awarded to health care employers pursuant to this section, and the health care employer's contributions, the trainees' tuition and fees shall be covered in full, and trainees shall be provided with assistance in meeting their living costs, such as housing and child care, while attending the program.

(b) In awarding grants pursuant to this section, VSAC shall give priority to health care employer proposals based on the following criteria:

(1) the extent to which the health care employer proposes to participate financially in the program;

(2) the extent of the health care employer's commitment to sustaining the program financially, including providing financial support for nurse preceptors, to create ongoing opportunities for educational advancement in nursing;

(3) the ability of the health care employer's staff to leverage nursing scholarship opportunities to maximize the reach of the grant funds;

(4) the employer's demonstrated ability to retain nursing students in the Vermont nursing workforce;

(5) the employer's geographic location, in order to ensure access to pipeline and apprenticeship programs for nursing staff across Vermont; and

(6) the employer's commitment to advancing the professional development of individuals from marginalized communities, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged in accessing educational opportunities and career advancement in the health care professions.

(c)(1) VSAC shall begin awarding grants under this section expeditiously in order to enable health care employer staff to begin enrolling in nursing school programs that commence in the fall of 2022.

(2) On or before September 15, 2022, VSAC shall provide an update to the Health Reform Oversight Committee on the status of program implementation.

Sec. 23. 18 V.S.A. § 34 is added to read:

§ 34. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

(b) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall:

(1) be enrolled at an approved postsecondary education institution as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 2822;

(2) demonstrate financial need;

(3) demonstrate academic capacity by carrying the minimum grade point average in the individual's course of study prior to receiving the fund award; and

(4) agree to work as a nurse in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of forgivable loan awarded.

(c)(1) First priority for forgivable loan funds shall be given to students pursuing a practical nursing certificate who will be eligible to sit for the NCLEX-PN examination upon completion of the certificate.

(2) Second priority for forgivable loan funds shall be given to students pursuing an associate's degree in nursing who will be eligible to sit for the NCLEX-RN examination upon graduation.

(3) Third priority for forgivable loan funds shall be given to students pursuing a bachelor of science degree in nursing.

(4) Fourth priority shall be given to students pursuing graduate nursing education.

(d) Students attending an approved postsecondary educational institution in Vermont shall receive first preference for forgivable loans.

(e) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be available to the Department of Health and the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional forgivable loans as set forth in this section.

Sec. 24. REPEAL

18 V.S.A. § 31 (educational assistance; incentives; nurses) is repealed.

*Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION*

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$100,000.00 in General Fund investment funds is appropriated to the Department of Health for forgivable loans for nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive Program established in Sec. 23 of this act.

Sec. 26. 18 V.S.A. § 35 is added to read:

§ 35. VERMONT NURSING AND PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT LOAN

REPAYMENT PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

(2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility requirements for loan repayment under this section.

(3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

(4) “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans under this section.

(5) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed, serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter for attendance at an eligible school.

(6) “Program” means the Vermont Nursing and Physician Assistant Loan Repayment Program created under this section.

(b) The Vermont Nursing and Physician Assistant Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who live and work as a nurse or physician assistant in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

(c) The loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the eligible individual by the Corporation, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.

(d) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

(1) have graduated from an eligible school where the individual has, within the past five years, been awarded a nursing degree or a degree in physician assistant studies;

(2) had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages from the eligible school;

(3) work as a nurse or physician assistant in this State; and

(4) be a resident of Vermont.

(e)(1) An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for each year of service as a nurse or physician assistant in this State.

(2) The Corporation shall award loan repayments in amounts that are sufficient to attract high-quality candidates while also making a meaningful increase in Vermont's health care professional workforce.

(f) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

Sec. 27. VERMONT NURSING AND PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT LOAN

REPAYMENT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health for loan repayment for nurses and physician assistants under the Vermont Nursing and Physician Assistant Loan Repayment Program established in Sec. 26 of this act.

~~Sec. 28, 18 V.S.A. § 36 is added to read:~~

~~§ 36 NURSE EDUCATOR FORGIVABLE LOAN AND LOAN~~

~~REPAYMENT PROGRAM~~

~~(a) Definitions. As used in this section:~~

~~(1) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility requirements under this section for a forgivable loan or loan repayment.~~

~~(2) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.~~

~~(3) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering tuition, room, board, and the cost of required books and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.~~

~~(4) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the federal government or from the State.~~

~~(5) “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans under this section.~~

~~(6) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed, serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter for attendance at an eligible school.~~

~~(7) “Nurse educator” means a nurse with a master’s or doctoral degree that qualifies the individual to teach at a nursing school in this State.~~

~~(a) Program means the Nurse Educator Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Program created under this section.~~

~~(b) Program creation. The Nurse Educator Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to working as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The Program also provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who work as nurse educators at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (e) of this section.~~

~~(c) The forgivable loan and loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the eligible individual by the Corporation, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.~~

~~(d) Eligibility for forgivable loans. To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following requirements:~~

~~(1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program that leads to a graduate degree in nursing;~~

~~(2) continually demonstrate satisfactory academic progress by maintaining the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages;~~

~~(3) have used any available gift aid;~~

~~(4) have executed a contract with the Corporation committing the individual to work as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State;~~

~~(5) have executed a promissory note that will reduce the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, if the individual fails to complete the period of service required in subsection (f) of this section; and~~

~~(6) have completed the Program's application form, the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA), and the Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance with a schedule determined by the Corporation.~~

~~(e) Eligibility for loan repayment. To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the following requirements:~~

~~(1) graduated from an eligible school where the individual has, within the past five years, been awarded a graduate degree in nursing;~~

~~(2) had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages from the eligible school;~~

~~(3) work as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State; and~~

~~(4) be a resident of Vermont.~~

~~(f) Service commitment.~~

~~(1) Forgivable loans. For each year of service as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State, an eligible individual shall be entitled to a full academic year of forgivable loan benefit under the Program. If an eligible individual fails to serve as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.~~

~~(2) Loan repayment. An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for each year of service as a nurse educator at a nursing school in this State.~~

~~(g) Adoption of policies, procedures, and guidelines. The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of this section.~~

Sec. 29. NURSE EDUCATOR FORGIVABLE LOAN AND LOAN

REPAYMENT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Department of Health for forgivable loans and loan repayment for nurse educators under the Nurse Educator Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Program established in Sec. 28 of this act.

Sec. 28. 18 V.S.A. § 36 is added to read:

§ 36. NURSE FACULTY FORGIVABLE LOAN AND LOAN

REPAYMENT PROGRAM

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility requirements under this section for a forgivable loan or loan repayment.

(2) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

(3) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering tuition, room, board, and the cost of required books and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

(4) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the federal government or from the State.

(5) “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans under this section.

(6) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed, serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter for attendance at an eligible school.

(7) “Nurse faculty member” or “member of the nurse faculty” means a nurse with a master’s or doctoral degree that qualifies the individual to teach at a nursing school in this State.

(8) “Program” means the Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Program created under this section.

(b) Program creation. The Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to working as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The Program also provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who work as nurse faculty members at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (e) of this section.

(c) Payment. The forgivable loan and loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the eligible individual by the

Corporation, subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.

(d) Eligibility for forgivable loans. To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

(1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program that leads to a graduate degree in nursing;

(2) continually demonstrate satisfactory academic progress by maintaining the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages;

(3) have used any available gift aid;

(4) have executed a contract with the Corporation committing the individual to work as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this State;

(5) have executed a promissory note that will reduce the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, if the individual fails to complete the period of service required in subsection (f) of this section; and

(6) have completed the Program's application form, the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA), and the Vermont grant application each

academic year of enrollment in accordance with a schedule determined by the Corporation.

(e) Eligibility for loan repayment. To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

(1) graduated from an eligible school where the individual has, within the past five years, been awarded a graduate degree in nursing;

(2) had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point averages from the eligible school;

(3) work as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this State; and

(4) be a resident of Vermont.

(f) Service commitment.

(1) Forgivable loans. For each year of service as a nurse faculty member at a nursing school in this State, an eligible individual shall be entitled to a full academic year of forgivable loan benefit under the Program.

If an eligible individual fails to serve as a nurse faculty member at a nursing school in this State for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro

rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.

(2) Loan repayment. An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for each year of service as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this State.

(g) Adoption of policies, procedures, and guidelines. The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

Sec. 29. NURSE FACULTY FORGIVABLE LOAN AND LOAN

REPAYMENT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Department of Health for forgivable loans and loan repayment for nurse faculty members under the Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Program established in Sec. 28 of this act.

Sec. 30. 18 V.S.A. § 9456 is amended to read:

§ 9456. BUDGET REVIEW

(a) The Board shall conduct reviews of each hospital's proposed budget based on the information provided pursuant to this subchapter and in accordance with a schedule established by the Board.

(b) In conjunction with budget reviews, the Board shall:

** * **

(10) require each hospital to provide information on administrative costs, as defined by the Board, including specific information on the amounts spent on marketing and advertising costs; ~~and~~

(11) require each hospital to create or maintain connectivity to the State's Health Information Exchange Network in accordance with the criteria established by the Vermont Information Technology Leaders, Inc., pursuant to subsection 9352(i) of this title, provided that the Board shall not require a hospital to create a level of connectivity that the State's Exchange is unable to support;

(12) review the hospital's investments in workforce development initiatives, including nursing workforce pipeline collaborations with nursing schools and compensation and other support for nurse preceptors; and

(13) consider the salaries for the hospital's executive and clinical leadership and the hospital's salary spread, including a comparison of median salaries to the medians of northern New England states.

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Sec. 31. GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; FISCAL YEAR 2023

*HOSPITAL BUDGET REVIEW; NURSING WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES*

For hospital fiscal year 2023, the Green Mountain Care Board may exclude all or a portion of a hospital's investments in nursing workforce development initiatives from any otherwise applicable financial limitations on the hospital's budget or budget growth. Notwithstanding any provision of GMCB Rule 3.202, the Board may modify its hospital budget guidance for hospital fiscal year 2023 as needed to comply with this section.

Sec. 32. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; HEALTH CARE

WORKFORCE DATA CENTER

(a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Office of Health Care Reform in the Agency of Human Services to enable the Agency to establish and operate the statewide Health Care Workforce Data Center. In order to enhance the State's public health data systems, respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and improve the State's COVID-19 mitigation and prevention efforts, the Center shall collect health care workforce data, shall collaborate with the Director of Health Care Reform to identify and propose solutions to address data gaps, and shall share the data with the Green Mountain Care Board as appropriate to inform the

Board's Health Resource Allocation Plan responsibilities pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9405.

(b) The Center shall use existing statewide information to the extent practicable to avoid imposing administrative burdens on health care providers and to avoid duplication of efforts underway elsewhere in Vermont. The Center shall expand its data collection practices over two years to include all levels of the health care workforce, beginning with the highest-level licensed health care professionals.

(c) In order to ensure the Center has access to accurate and timely health care workforce data, the Center:

(1) shall have the cooperation of other State agencies and departments in responding to the Center's requests for information;

(2) may enter into data use agreements with institutions of higher education and other public and private entities, to the extent permitted under State and federal law; and

(3) may collect vacancy and turnover information from health care employers.

(d) One permanent classified Health Care Workforce Data Center Manager position is created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care Reform in fiscal year 2023 to manage the Health Care Workforce Data Center created pursuant to this section.

(e) The Agency of Human Services may include proposals for additional funding or data access, or both, for the Center as part of the Agency's fiscal year 2024 budget request.

*Sec. 33. OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; BARRIERS TO
MENTAL HEALTH LICENSURE; REPORT*

The Office of Professional Regulation shall undertake a systematic review of the licensing processes for mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals to identify barriers to licensure. On or before January 15, 2023, the Office shall provide its findings and recommendations to address any identified barriers to licensure to the House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, on Commerce and Economic Development, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and on Government Operations.

*Sec. 34. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;
APPROPRIATION*

(a) One classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce Coordinator position is created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care Reform in fiscal year 2023 to support the health care workforce initiatives set forth in this act and in the Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan. The Coordinator shall focus on building educational, clinical,

and housing partnerships and support structures to increase and improve health care workforce training, recruitment, and retention.

(b) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care Reform for the Health Care Workforce Coordinator position, of which \$120,000.00 is for personal services and \$50,000.00 is for operating expenses.

*Sec. 35. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE
BOARD; SUPPLY AND DEMAND MODELING*

On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Green Mountain Care Board, shall explore and recommend to the House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, and on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs a process, methodology, and necessary funding amounts to establish and maintain the capacity to perform health care supply and demand modeling based on information in the Health Care Workforce Data Center, for use by health care employers, health care educators, and policymakers.

*Sec. 36. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL REGULATION; GREEN
MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS;
ADMINISTRATIVE COST REDUCTION; REPORT*

(a) The Department of Financial Regulation shall explore the feasibility of requiring health insurers and their prior authorization vendors to access clinical data from the Vermont Health Information Exchange whenever possible to support prior authorization requests in situations in which a request cannot be automatically approved.

(b) The Department of Financial Regulation shall direct health insurers to provide prior authorization information to the Department in a format required by the Department in order to enable the Department to analyze opportunities to align and streamline prior authorization request processes. The Department shall share its findings and recommendations with the Green Mountain Care Board, and the Department and the Board shall collaborate to provide recommendations to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance on or before January 15, 2023 regarding the statutory changes necessary to align and streamline prior authorization processes and requirements across health insurers.

Sec. 37. 33 V.S.A. § 3543 is amended to read:

§ 3543. STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE

(a)(1) There is established a need-based student loan repayment assistance program for the purpose of providing student loan repayment assistance to any individual employed by a regulated, privately operated center-based child care program or family child care home.

(2) An eligible individual shall:

(A) work in a privately operated center-based child care program or in a family child care home that is regulated by the Division for at least an average of 30 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year, except that this minimum time requirement does not apply to an employee of Vermont Head Start to the extent it conflicts with any law or contract provision governing the terms of employment;

(B) receive an annual salary of not more than \$50,000.00; and

(C) have earned an associates or bachelor's degree with a major concentration in early childhood, child and human development, elementary education, special education with a birth to age eight focus, or child and family services within the preceding five years.

* * *

*Sec. 38. PILOT PROGRAM; POSITIONS EMBEDDED WITHIN
RECOVERY CENTERS*

(a)(1) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$1,290,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department for Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living's Division of Vocation Rehabilitation for the purpose of developing and implementing a two-year pilot program that authorizes 15 FTE new limited-service positions embedded within 12 recovery centers across the State.

(2) The 15 FTE limited-service positions shall be allocated as follows:

(A) Of the total appropriation, \$540,000.00 total shall be allocated in equal amounts to fund the following 2.5 FTE at each of two geographically diverse recovery centers:

(i) one FTE to serve as an employment counselor within the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation;

(ii) one FTE to serve as an employment consultant within the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation; and

(iii) 0.5 FTE to serve as Employment Assistance Program staff within the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation.

(B) Of the total appropriation, \$75,000.00 shall be allocated in equal amounts to fund one FTE who shall serve as an employment support counselor at each of the 10 remaining recovery centers in the State.

(b) On or before January 1, 2024, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation, shall submit a report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Health and Welfare summarizing the effectiveness of the pilot program, including:

- (1) educational attainment and achievement of program recipients;
- (2) acquisition of a credential of value pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 546;
- (3) number of job placements; and
- (4) job retention rates.

Sec. 39. CREDENTIAL OF VALUE GOAL; PUBLIC-PRIVATE

PARTNERSHIP; APPROPRIATION

(a) Duties. In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a performance-based contract to perform the following duties, in coordination and alignment with State partners, in support of the State's goal articulated in 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters hold a credential of value by 2025 (Goal):

- (1) increase public awareness of the value of postsecondary education and training to help persons of any age make informed decisions about the

value of education and training that would further their advancement in educational pathways and pursuit of career goals, through targeted outreach as outlined in subsection (b) of this section;

(2) promote a broad understanding of the public good and value in achieving the State's Goal and of actions stakeholders can take to increase attainment;

(3) assist or coordinate with stakeholders, such as educational, business, governmental, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, in activities that seek to align the delivery of high-quality education and training opportunities with career advancement and support the policy priorities outlined in 10 V.S.A. § 546;

(4) collect and display publicly available, nonconfidential information about postsecondary credentials available to Vermonters;

(5) facilitate conversations or provide information about the national best practices in aligning, recognizing, measuring, tracking, and promoting postsecondary credentials of value to the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education when requested;

(6) maintain web-based resources that provide information about opportunities to obtain a postsecondary credential of value, in coordination with State partners;

(7) support the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education transition or integration of Advance Vermont's web-based resources and collected information referenced in subdivisions (4) and (6) of this subsection into a State-supported system in a coordinated way; and

(8) meet on a quarterly basis with the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education about activities described in this subsection.

(b) Outreach. The contractor may use funds awarded by the State to:

(1) create and distribute public-facing communications and resources related to the duties described in this section; and

(2) offer support to career and education counselors, employment and training counselors, jobseekers and their families, and other stakeholders, consistent with best practice and State policy and programs, to help them better understand the postsecondary education and training landscape.

(c) Reports. The contractor shall provide written reports to:

(1) the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education about anticipated work and activities using a simplified reporting template jointly developed by the contractor and the State entities on a quarterly basis; and

(2) on or before December 15, 2022, the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction regarding the use of funds, activities performed, and outcomes achieved pursuant to this section.

Sec. 40. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM;

APPROPRIATION

In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to provide funding for capital and operating needs of groups participating in the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program, which supports workforce development goals through creating meaningful paid service and learning opportunities for young adults.

Sec. 41. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) Adult education and literacy services are a key piece of the workforce development system and serve as the entryway into career readiness and workforce development for tens of thousands of our most vulnerable Vermonters, those with low literacy, under-education, or those simply in need of increased skills so that they can succeed.

(2) 36,000 adults in Vermont do not have a high school credential, and tens of thousands more lack the skills to matriculate into and be successful in college, in career training programs, or both. Adult education and literacy providers are the first stop on the path to the transformative opportunities that Vermont is offering for these individuals.

(3) Adult education and literacy services help people build the assets they need to move out of poverty successfully, as well as the confidence to continue to move toward success throughout their lives. Students are supported to identify concrete goals and then break those goals down into steps. Students set goals in the domains of:

(A) family and life;

(B) academics; and

(C) career and college readiness.

Sec. 42. FINDINGS; FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

The General Assembly finds for the purposes of this section and Secs. 43 to 45 of this act:

(1) Private and public forestlands:

(A) constitute unique and irreplaceable resources, benefits, and values of statewide importance;

(B) contribute to the protection and conservation of wildlife habitat, air, water, and soil resources of the State;

(C) mitigate the effects of climate change; and

(D) benefit the general health and welfare of the persons of the State.

(2) The forest products sector, including maple sap collection:

(A) is a major contributor to and is valuable to the State's economy by providing nearly 14,000 jobs for Vermonters, generating \$2.1 billion in

annual sales, and supporting \$30.8 million in additional economic activity from trail uses and seasonal tourism;

(B) is essential to the manufacture of forest products that are used and enjoyed by the persons of the State; and

(C) benefits the general welfare of the persons of the State.

(3) Private and public forestlands are critical for and contribute significantly to the State's outdoor recreation and tourism economies.

(4) Eighty percent of Vermont's forestland is held in private ownership, of which 56 percent of private lands are enrolled in the forestland category of Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA). UVA is Vermont's most important conservation program and contains the largest foundation of supply to support a vibrant forest-based rural economy.

(5) Economic realities and demand pressures for urban, commercial, and residential land uses throughout the State continue to challenge forest landowners trying to maintain intact forests. Forest fragmentation can adversely affect the natural environment and viable forest management. Addressing the economic and social needs of the forest products sector is paramount to keeping forests intact, viable, and healthy.

(6) The encouragement, development, improvement, and preservation of forestry operations will result in extant, intact, and functioning forests that will

provide a general benefit to the health and welfare of the persons of the State and the State's economy.

(7) To strengthen, promote, and protect the Vermont forest products sector, the State should establish the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap.

Sec. 43. 10 V.S.A. chapter 82 is added to read:

CHAPTER 82. VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

§ 2531. VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

(a) Creation. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall create the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap to strengthen, modernize, promote, and protect the forest products sector in Vermont. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation may contract with a qualified contractor for the creation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap. During the contract proposal process, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall seek a proposal to complete the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap from the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

(b) Intended outcomes. The intended outcomes of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap are to:

(1) increase sustainable economic development and jobs in Vermont's forest economy;

(2) promote ways to expand the workforce and strengthen forest product enterprises in order to strengthen, modernize, promote, and protect the Vermont forest economy into the future;

(3) promote the importance of healthy, resilient, and sustainably managed working forests that provide a diverse array of high-quality products now and in the future; and

(4) identify actionable strategies designed to strengthen, modernize, promote, and protect the forest products sector in Vermont, including opportunities for new product development, opening new markets for Vermont forest products, adopting modern manufacturing processes, and utilizing new ways to market Vermont forest products.

(c) Strategic Roadmap content. In developing the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or the relevant contractor shall:

(1) review all existing data, plans, and industry-level research completed over the past 10 years, including the Working Lands Enterprise Fund's Forest Sector Systems Analysis, and identify any recommendations in those reports in order to build upon previous efforts;

(2) identify infrastructure investment and funding to support and promote Vermont forest products enterprises;

(3) identify regulatory barriers and propose policy recommendations to support and strengthen the Vermont forest economy;

(4) identify opportunities for all State agencies to engage with and enhance the Vermont forest products sector, including the Department of Buildings and General Services, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Department of Tourism and Marketing, the Agency of Education, the Agency of Transportation, the Department of Public Service, the Agency of Natural Resources, the Department of Financial Regulation, and the Department of Labor;

(5) develop recommendations to support education and training of the current and future workforce of the Vermont forest products sector;

(6) propose alternatives for the modernization of transportation and regulation of Vermont forest products enterprises, including modernization of local and State permits;

(7) identify methods or programs that Vermont forest enterprises can utilize to access business assistance services;

(8) recommend how to maintain access by Vermont forest products enterprises to forestland and how to maintain the stewardship and conservation of Vermont forests as a whole;

(9) propose methods to enhance market development and manufacturing by Vermont forest products enterprises, including value chain coordination and regional partnerships;

(10) recommend consumer education and marketing initiatives; and

(11) recommend how to clarify the roles of various public entities and nongovernmental organizations that provide certain services to the forestry sector and to ensure coordination and alignment of those functions in order to advance and maximize the strength of the forest products industry.

(d) Process for development of Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap.

(1) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant contractor shall develop the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap and all subsequent revisions through the use of a public stakeholder process that includes and invites participation by interested parties representing all users of Vermont's forests, including representatives of forest products enterprises, State agencies, investors, forestland owners, recreational interests, loggers, foresters, truckers, sawmills, firewood processors, wood products manufacturers, education representatives, and others.

(2) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, in collaboration with forest products sector stakeholders, shall review the Strategic Roadmap periodically and shall update the Strategic Roadmap at least every 10 years.

(e) Advisory panel; administration.

(1) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant contractor shall convene a Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap advisory panel to review and counsel in the development and implementation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap. The advisory panel shall include representatives of forest products enterprises, State agencies, investors, forestland owners, foresters, loggers, truckers, wood products manufacturers, recreational specialists, education representatives, trade organizations, and other partners as deemed appropriate. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall select representatives to the advisory panel.

(2) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant contractor may seek grants or other means of assistance to support the development and implementation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap.

Sec. 44. IMPLEMENTATION

(a) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant contractor shall submit to the General Assembly:

(1) draft recommendations for the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap on or before July 1, 2023; and

(2) a final report and recommendations for the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap on or before January 1, 2024.

(b) Any recommendation submitted under this section shall include recommended appropriations sufficient to implement the recommendation or the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap as a whole.

Sec. 45. APPROPRIATIONS

In addition to any other funds appropriated to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, in fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department to enter a two-year contract in fiscal year 2023 for the purpose of contracting for the development of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap required by 10 V.S.A. § 2531.

Sec. 46. ECONOMIC RECOVERY GRANT PROGRAM; REVERSION

In fiscal year 2022, of the amounts appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. G. 300(a)(13), from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for the Economic Recovery Grant Program:

(1) \$8,000,000.00 shall revert to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds; and

(2) any additional amounts remaining in the Program at the close of fiscal year 2022 shall revert to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds and the Agency shall report such amount to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its July 2022 meeting.

Sec. 47. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022, except that:

(1) Sec. 13 (Secondary Student Industry Recognized Credential Pilot Project) and Sec. 46 (Economic Recovery Grant Program funding) shall take effect on passage.

(2) Sec. 30 (18 V.S.A. § 9456) shall take effect on January 1, 2023 and shall apply to hospital fiscal years 2024 and after.