

House Calendar

Thursday, April 1, 2021

86th DAY OF THE BIENNIAL SESSION

House Convenes at 1:15 PM

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Action Postponed Until April 1, 2021

Senate Proposal of Amendment

H. 315

An act relating to COVID-19 relief

The Senate proposes to the House to amend the bill by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Federal Funding, Administration * * *

Sec. 1. FEDERAL FUNDS; ANTICIPATED RECEIPTS

(a) To the extent that appropriations in this act are made from federal funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), including state holding funds that are established as a result of the ARPA, the Commissioner of Finance and Management is authorized, to make expenditures in anticipation of receipts as necessary. The Commissioner shall immediately notify the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, or the Joint Fiscal Committee through the Joint Fiscal Office when the General Assembly is not in session, if any such expenditure is later deemed impermissible by subsequent federal guidance.

(b) The appropriations in this act from funds provided by ARPA of 2021 shall carry forward from fiscal year 2021 until expended.

Sec. 1a. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021: ACCEPTANCE OF SPECIFIC FEDERAL GRANTS

(a) Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A § 5, funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund, the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, and the Homeowner Assistance Fund shall be deposited into the State Treasury and are hereby accepted and shall be spent subject to appropriation.

(b) Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A § 5, any funds received through Section 2001 of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and not required to be made as subgrants to local educational agencies in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 shall be spent subject to appropriation.

Sec. 2. REMAINING CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUNDS;
CARRYFORWARD, REVERSION, AND APPLICATION

(a) To the extent that Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) spending authority made through appropriation or approval of the Joint Fiscal Committee remains

available as of June 30, 2021, any amounts necessary to pay for expenditures that have been obligated but not paid out as of June 30, 2021 shall carry forward to fiscal year 2022.

(b) Prior to the close of fiscal year 2021, the Commissioner of Finance and Management is authorized to revert all unobligated CRF appropriations to the State CRF. In fiscal year 2021, the total amount of CRF reverted under this subsection shall be appropriated to the Department of Corrections for CRF eligible public safety payroll and benefits costs and the same amount of General Fund appropriated to the Department of Corrections shall be reverted. To the extent there are insufficient eligible public safety payroll and benefits costs, any remaining reverted CRF balance shall be appropriated to the Department of Corrections and the same amount of General Fund appropriated to the Department of Corrections shall be reverted in fiscal year 2022.

(c) The Commissioner shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on or before June 1, 2021 with estimates of each of the following: CRF carryforward need, CRF reversions, and total CRF appropriation to the Department of Corrections and the General Fund reversion from Department of Corrections anticipated on or before June 30, 2021 as authorized under this section. The report shall also include a brief description of the degree to which FEMA funding applications and awards are impacting these estimates. The Commissioner shall provide a final report on these amounts to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its meeting in July 2021.

* * * Commerce and Community Development; Targeted Business Grants * * *

Sec. 3. GAP ECONOMIC RECOVERY GRANTS; FISCAL YEAR 2021 ONE-TIME APPROPRIATION

(a) Appropriation.

(1)(A) In fiscal year 2021, the amount of \$10,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide gap economic recovery grants to eligible businesses pursuant to this act.

(B) Of this amount, the Agency shall work with community partners to allocate \$1,000,000.00 for eligible businesses owned by Vermonters who are members of underrepresented communities that have historically experienced unequal access to State economic benefits and services or suffered discrimination due to race, gender, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, disability status, or other similar factors.

(2) The Agency may use not more than five percent of the appropriated

funds for the costs of administration, including technical assistance and guidance concerning potential eligibility for federal programs.

(b) Eligibility. To be eligible for a grant, a business shall meet the following criteria:

(1) The business is domiciled or has its primary place of business in Vermont.

(2) The business is organized and operated:

(A) on a for-profit basis, including a sole proprietor, partnership, limited liability company, business corporation, cooperative, or mutual benefit enterprise; or

(B) on a nonprofit or low-profit basis, including a mutual benefit corporation, public benefit corporation, and a low-profit limited liability company.

(3) The business submits a written plan that demonstrates that the business will use grant funds for business-related operations and economic recovery and that:

(A) the business is open at the time of application; or

(B) the business is closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency but has a good-faith plan to reopen within 60 days of receiving the grant award and will use grant funds for reopening.

(4) The business suffered an economic loss due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and has filed a 2020 tax return that demonstrates a tax loss.

(5) At the time the business submits its application to the Agency, the business demonstrates that it has not received prior COVID-19-related State assistance and:

(A) the business has applied for the forgivable loans and grants made available through the Paycheck Protection Program, the Economic Injury Disaster Relief Advance program, or other COVID-19-related business financial assistance programs created by, or as modified by, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, P.L. 116-260, but was denied assistance because the business does not meet the eligibility criteria for any program; or

(B) the business has not applied for any such assistance based on a determination by a financial institution or other participating lender, an attorney, an accountant, or another qualified financial professional that the business is not eligible for such assistance because the business does not meet the eligibility criteria for any program.

(6) The business is in compliance with current State health and safety protocols established by Executive Order.

(c) Amount of grant. A grant shall not exceed the lesser of:

(1) the loss demonstrated on the business's 2020 tax return;

(2) three times the eligible business's fixed monthly expenses for commercial mortgage or rent, insurance, electricity, heat, water, sewer service, telecommunications service, and Internet service; or

(3) \$150,000.00.

(d) Grant administration; use of funds; future grant awards. Any amounts that remain unspent through the program shall revert to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for purposes of supplementing any future economic recovery grant program established prior to January 1, 2022, and if no program is established, then to the General Fund.

(e) Guidelines. Not later than 10 days after the effective date of this act, the Agency shall publish guidelines governing the implementation of the program, which at minimum shall:

(1) establish application award procedures, and a timeline for accepting applications and awarding grants;

(2) establish standards to determine whether an eligible business has its primary place of business in Vermont;

(3) establish standards for the use of grant funds for the purpose of business-related economic recovery;

(4) establish procedures to ensure that grant awards comply with the requirements of this section and that the State maintains adequate records to demonstrate compliance with this section;

(5) establish procedures to prevent, detect, and mitigate fraud, waste, error, and abuse; and

(6) establish procedures to ensure that grant applicants comply with State and federal employment and labor laws.

(f) Reporting. The Agency shall submit two reports to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs detailing the implementation of this section, including specific information concerning the amount, identity, and demographic information of grant recipients, which shall be publicly available:

(1) an initial report following the 30-day approval period specified in subdivision (d)(1) of this section; and

(2) a final report not later than 30 days after program funds are exhausted.

(g) Auditing; compliance. The Agency shall include in all grant awards standard audit provisions, substantially similar to the audit provisions included pursuant to administrative bulletins 3.5 and 5.0, that provide that records pertaining to grant awards shall be retained and remain subject to audit and inspection by the Agency and the State Auditor of Accounts for a period of time specified by the Agency.

(h) Recapture. The Agency shall include in all grant awards standard recapture provisions, which shall include that a grant award may be subject to recapture if a recipient is found to be ineligible for the award or to have used an award for an ineligible purpose, consistent with the guidelines the Agency adopts pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

Sec. 3a. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021;
FUTURE BUSINESS GRANT AWARDS

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development and other relevant Executive Branch agencies and departments shall consult and coordinate in a timely manner with legislative policy committees of jurisdiction through the Office of Legislative Counsel and the Joint Fiscal Office in the development of proposals for future distributions of funds for business recovery through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Sec. 3b. VERMONT MICROBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund in fiscal year 2021 to Department for Children and Families, Office of Economic Opportunity, to be granted to the Community Action Agencies for the Statewide Community Action Network's Economic Micro Business Recovery Assistance for the COVID-19 Epidemic (EMBRACE) to assist the Vermont microbusiness owners impacted by COVID-19.

* * * Housing and Homeowner Assistance * * *

Sec. 4. VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION BOARD,
HOUSING AND FACILITIES

The sum of \$10,000,000.00 of General Fund is appropriated to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board in fiscal year 2021, which the Board shall use, in part through grants to nonprofit housing partners and service

organizations, for housing and facilities necessary to provide safe shelter to lower-income and at-risk populations. These funds are intended to be expended as expeditiously as possible on projects ready to proceed in 2021 and designed to meet immediate housing needs.

Sec. 5. HOMEOWNER; MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

The sum of \$5,000,000.00 is appropriated from Coronavirus Relief Funds in fiscal year 2021 to the Department of Housing and Community Development for a grant to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency to provide financial and technical assistance to stabilize low- and moderate-income homeowners and prevent home foreclosures for Vermont families. To the extent permitted by federal law and guidance, these funds may be used to provide mortgage assistance retroactively to January 1, 2021.

* * * Human Services, Mental Health and Health Care * * *

Sec. 6. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; EMERGENCY OUTREACH SERVICES GRANTS

The sum of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 for grants to peer-led and impacted member-led organizations for emergency outreach services to address COVID-19-related needs. Of these funds, the Department shall allocate \$150,000.00 to a mental health peer-support organization and \$150,000.00 to an organization supporting the needs of LGBTQ youths.

Sec. 7. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; HOUSING

The sum of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 to make existing housing and community-based service facilities providing mental health services more accessible, safe, and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act or to expand capacity in community settings. The Department shall select the projects in consultation with the Agency of Human Services Secretary's Office, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and representatives of the designated agencies, specialized service agencies, and peer organizations. The grants shall be awarded to organizations that demonstrate the greatest ability to respond immediately to the need for housing and shall be for projects that will not require additional State funds for operating costs in future years. At least one grant shall be awarded to a peer-run or peer-directed housing organization. The Department of Mental Health

shall partner with the Agency of Human Services Secretary's Office and the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living to include as potential grant candidates all designated and specialized service agencies that provide developmental and mental health services.

Sec. 8. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The sum of \$850,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 to provide funds to the mental health designated agencies to enable them each to hire an additional case manager to provide case management services to Vermont residents who may not previously have been part of an agency's caseload but whose lives have been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and who are now urgently in need of these agencies' supports. Agencies have the flexibility to identify where the targeted need exists within their agency, across all programs. The purpose funded in this section is limited to addressing the impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and not intended to create an ongoing funding commitment.

Sec. 9. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; WORKFORCE TRAINING AND WELLNESS SUPPORTS

The sum of \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 for training and wellness supports for frontline health care workers to help them meet Vermont residents' current mental health needs, such as training for emergency department personnel responding to an increased demand for crisis services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and training on trauma-informed and trauma-specific care for mental health professionals responding to the surge in mental health treatment needs. These workers would also benefit from wellness supports as they continue to care for people in crisis while experiencing their own stress, anxiety, and trauma as a result of the pandemic.

Sec. 9a. RECOVERY CENTER SUPPLEMENTAL GRANTS

(a) The sum of \$240,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Health to make grants of \$20,000.00 to cover the financial impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at each of the recovery centers statewide.

Sec. 10. SUPPORTS FOR NEW AMERICANS, REFUGEES, AND IMMIGRANTS

(a) The sum of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Agency of Human Services in fiscal year 2021 for distribution in equal amounts to the Association of Africans Living in Vermont and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants' Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program for various purposes related to COVID-19, including:

(1) interpretation and translation services related to COVID-19, including accessing testing and vaccines;

(2) purchasing laptops and providing digital literacy for households to ensure that children can attend school remotely, that families can access telehealth services, and that adult family members can find employment;

(3) providing case management services related to an increased need related to housing assistance, workforce development, and employment coaching; and

(4) providing navigation of Reach Up, 3SquaresVT, and other public assistance programs following job losses.

Sec. 11. GRANTS TO REACH UP PARTICIPANTS

The sum of \$1,300,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department for Children and Families in fiscal year 2021 for the purposes of distributing monies to families participating in the Reach Up program. These funds shall be distributed in a manner similar to the distribution funds made to the population under 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 136, Sec. 15.

Sec. 12. VERMONT FOOD BANK

(a) The sum of \$1,376,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund in fiscal year 2021 to the Agency of Human Services' Central Office to be granted to the Vermont Food Bank to pay the costs of the Vermont Farmers to Families Food Box Program for the months of January and February 2021.

(b) The sum of \$82,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund in fiscal year 2021 to the Agency of Human Services' Central Office to be granted to the Vermont Food Bank for statewide provision of diapers to families in need.

Sec. 13. GRANT TO THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

(a) The sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department

of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living in fiscal year 2021 to be granted to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired for a technology training program for older Vermonters who experience decreased vision and blindness and others who are blind or visually impaired to address social isolation resulting from social distancing.

Sec. 14. GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH; HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES; DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

(a) The sum of \$66,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Green Mountain Care Board in fiscal year 2021 to provide the State share pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9374(h) for updates to the Vermont Healthcare Claims Uniform Reporting and Evaluation System (VHCURES) to improve data collection related to health equity.

(b) The sum of \$134,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2021 for collection and analysis of demographic data, including race and ethnicity data, regarding Vermont residents who experience health disparities.

Sec. 14a. 18 V.S.A. § 1129(d) and (e) are amended to read:

(d) The Department may provide confidential registry information to health care provider networks serving Vermont patients, to the Vermont Health Information Exchange, and, with the approval of the Commissioner, to researchers who present evidence of approval from an institutional review board in accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 164.512.

(e) Prior to releasing confidential information pursuant to subsections (c) and (d) of this section, the Commissioner shall obtain from State registries, health care provider networks, the Vermont Health Information Exchange, and researchers a written agreement to keep any identifying information confidential and privileged.

* * * Education * * *

Sec. 15. SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY GRANT PROGRAM

(a) Appropriation. In fiscal year 2021, \$15,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund for the Pre-K–12 Education Pandemic - School Indoor Air Quality Grant Program established in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 120, Sec. A.51. This appropriation may be adjusted if the Commissioner of Finance and Management determines that federal FEMA funds will be awarded for this purpose. The funds authorized by this section shall be either granted by the Agency of Education or paid to Efficiency Vermont to carry out the duties

listed in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 120, Sec. A.51(e). Efficiency Vermont is authorized to use up to \$250,000.00 of the \$15,000,000.00 appropriated under this section for direct labor costs.

(b) Authorization. Efficiency Vermont shall require that any school that receives a grant through the School Indoor Air Quality Grant Program established in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 120, Sec. A.51 authorize Efficiency Vermont to release the school name and grant amount in any report requested by the General Assembly.

(c) Reporting. Upon expenditure of the funds, the Agency of Education shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the specific uses of the funds appropriated in subsection (a) of this section on or before March 15, 2022.

Sec. 16. EDUCATION SERVICES; FEDERAL FUNDS APPROPRIATIONS

In fiscal year 2021 and to be carried forward, appropriations are made to the Agency of Education from federal funds for Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSR) funds provided in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Section 2001(f) as follows:

(1) Literacy Training. \$3,000,000.00 for the Agency of Education to provide grants to supervisory districts and supervisory unions, on behalf of their member school districts, to provide professional development for teachers in methods of teaching literacy.

(A) The Agency shall administer the grant program and determine which supervisory districts and supervisory unions are eligible and the amount to be granted to each applicant based on its assessment of the relative need for this funding, taking into account the following factors across applicants:

- (i) literacy assessments of students;
- (ii) the number of literacy instructors per enrolled students;
- (iii) the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals;
- (iv) the percentage of students who are English language learners;
- (v) discrepancies in outcome data on literacy for students from historically underserved populations, including, to the extent that data is available in compliance with privacy laws, students who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color and students on individualized education programs; and
- (vi) the extent to which teacher professional development is

integrated with a multitiered system of supports.

(B) There is established one limited service position, Education Programs Manager, within the Agency of Education for the literacy training program established by this section. The Agency of Education may utilize funds appropriated in this subdivision (1) for this position.

(2) Student Mental Health. \$500,000.00 to fund collaboration with the Department of Mental Health and Health programs in schools to educate parents and school faculty on the signs of depression and suicide and to provide information and resources for assistance.

(3) Truancy. \$1,000,000.00 to provide services to school districts and supervisory unions to address the needs of students who have been truant during the pandemic and integrate them into a supportive school culture.

(4) Afterschool and Summer Programs. \$4,000,000.00 that shall be transferred to the Department for Children and Families – Child Development Division to be distributed to the Afterschool for All program. These funds shall be used for grants to afterschool and summer programs that fulfill requirements specified in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(2) and (3).

(5) Summer Meals: In fiscal year 2021 and to be carried forward, \$5,500,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Agency of Education to ensure that children and families have access to nutritious foods throughout the summer. This appropriation may be adjusted if the Commissioner of Finance and Management determines that federal FEMA funds will be awarded for this purpose.

Sec. 17. PRACTICAL NURSE; WORKFORCE FUNDING

(a) The sum of \$1,400,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to open 40 to 45 seats in the Practical Nurse Program in partnership with skilled nursing facilities across the State to upskill existing staff to achieve certification as a Practical Nurse. These funds may be used as follows:

(1) Up to \$500,000.00 for administrative and start-up costs for Vermont Technical College.

(2) Up to \$260,000.00 in incentive payments in the amount of \$6,000.00 per student to offset lost income during enrollment in the Program.

(3) All remaining funds are allocated for tuition and fees payments for required prerequisite courses at Community College of Vermont and for the Practical Nurse Program at Vermont Technical College after available federal and State financial aid is applied to ensure no cost to the student.

(b) To be eligible to participate in the program, a skilled nursing facility shall provide an incentive match in the amount of \$4,000.00 per student during enrollment in the Program.

Sec. 18. WORKFORCE UPSKILL OPPORTUNITY

(a) The sum of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to provide up to two free classes in the summer or fall of 2021 and spring 2022 at any of the Vermont State Colleges for any Vermont resident who is seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance the resident's job skills.

(b) The sum of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the University of Vermont to provide up to two free classes in summer or fall of 2021 and spring 2022 for any Vermont resident who is seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance the resident's job skills.

Sec. 19. RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES; ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITY

(a) The sum of \$2,800,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) to provide up to two free class in the summer or fall of 2021 and spring 2022 at any of the Vermont State Colleges for any Vermont 2020 or 2021 high school graduate to enhance the graduate's work or academic skills. VSAC may provide a stipend of \$200.00 per student per class for transportation, books, or other class or attendance-related costs, and may allocate up to \$100,000.00 for the cost of administering this program.

* * * Reserve for Retirement Related Obligations * * *

Sec. 20. PENSION AND OTHER POSTEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT OBLIGATIONS; LONG-TERM PLAN

(a) In fiscal year 2021, the amount of \$20,000,000.00 in General Fund monies is hereby reserved to be part of pension funding initiatives and prefunding of other postemployment benefits (OPEB).

(b) On or before May 30, 2021, the General Assembly and the Administration, in collaboration with the Treasurer and interested parties, shall

develop a long-term plan to address pension and OPEB liabilities. The funds reserved in subsection (a) of this section are available for an appropriation as part of this long-term funding initiative.

* * * Public Service; Broadband * * *

Sec. 21. BROADBAND ALLOCATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS

(a) Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Authorization and Allocation: Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the Department of Public Service is authorized to use \$3,200,000.00 of the unobligated balance remaining from the CRF appropriated to the Department for broadband programs in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 137 as follows:

(1) \$1,600,000.00 shall be allocated for additional assistance under the COVID-Response Line Extension Customer Assistance Program established in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 137, Sec. 13. The customer costs eligible for financial assistance under this Program shall include costs for associated equipment such as routers and modems; and

(2) \$1,600,000.00 shall be allocated to extend the COVID-Response Temporary Broadband Lifeline Program established in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 137, Sec. 13(d) for the covered period beginning on March 1, 2021 and extending until such funds are depleted. The subsidy under this Program may be used for the provision of broadband service and connected devices.

(b) The sum of \$1,800,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Public Service as follows:

(1) \$1,600,000.00 for the COVID-Response Connected Community Resilience Program established in 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 137, Sec. 14, and for a broadband infrastructure program to assist CUDs with preconstruction costs and general support services; and

(2) \$200,000.00 to fund the following:

(A) one or more limited-term employment positions to provide outreach, technical assistance, and other support services to communications union districts;

(B) restoration of the Vermont Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) service for remote conference calling service for the deaf or hard of hearing; and

(C) Wi-Fi hotspot license renewals.

* * * Natural Resources and Agriculture * * *

Sec. 22. NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE

(a) In fiscal year 2021, funds are appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund as follows:

(1) \$3,000,000.00 to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the Working Lands Program. Of these funds, \$500,000.00 is allocated for a grants related to slaughter, meat processing and meat processing training proposals.

(2) \$10,000,000.00 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the following:

(A) \$5,000,000.00 to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC); and

(B) \$5,000,000.00 to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' Central Office for investments to improve recreational infrastructure and access on State lands and to fund repairs and improvements to Vermont's trail network on both private and public land.

(b) In fiscal year 2021, funds are appropriated from the General Fund as follows:

(1) \$14,000,000.00 to the Department of Environmental Conservation for brownfield remediation and environmental clean-up and related administrative costs; and

(2) \$250,000.00 to the Agency of Agriculture for continuation of work in soil conservation practice and payment for ecosystem services including the costs of the task force established by 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 83.

Sec. 23. [Deleted.]

Sec. 24. TAXATION; ANNUAL LINK TO FEDERAL STATUTES;
TAX YEAR 2020

It is the intent of the General Assembly that this act shall include legislative language conforming the Vermont tax code under 32 V.S.A. §§ 5824 and 7402(8) to the statutes of the United States for taxable year 2020, and further, to make explicit in this act the incorporation or lack thereof of the federal income tax-related changes enacted on March 11, 2021 in the American Recovery Plan Act, Pub. L. No. 117-2.

* * * Technical Assistance * * *

Sec. 25. PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES TO
LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

(a) The sum of \$2,800,000.00 is appropriated in fiscal year 2021 and to be carried forward, to the Agency of Education from federal funds for Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSR) funds provided in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Section 2001(f)(1), to fund a contract or contracts, for the period of award through December 2023, to provide support for Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), including charter schools that are LEAs, in their utilization of Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds and with assistance in utilization of other federal funds received through the various federal budget processes.

(b) Specifically, the contractor or contractors shall assist the LEAs with activities:

(1) to address learning loss by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions;

(2) to address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the student subgroups described in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2)(B)(xi)), students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care;

(3) to aid LEAs with planning and implementation to effectively use these federal funds for other areas of need consistent with state and federal law and regulations; including but not limited to facilities improvements and technological needs.

(4) to aid LEAs in prioritizing activities that will effectively use these federal funds without creating an ongoing funding demand.

(5) to assist in fund reporting and to provide other guidance to ensure that the funds are used in accordance with federal law and regulations within the time period allowed by law.

(c) The Agency may go through a bidding process or is authorized to award a sole source contract consistent with 3 V.S.A. § 3026 to the University of Vermont.

Sec. 26. PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES TO
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

(a) The sum of \$950,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to be granted as follows:

(1) \$650,000.00 to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), to

be used through State fiscal year 2024, to establish a support program for the use of federal funds received under 42 U.S.C. 801 Sec. 603, the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. The VLCT shall use these resources to work with local governments to facilitate the local communities' efforts to:

(A) respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts;

(B) assist with fund reporting, accountability, transparency, and usage technical assistance where necessary;

(C) provide for other guidance to ensure that 42 U.S.C. 801 Sec. 603 funds are used in accordance with federal law and regulations; and

(D) provide guidance; model templates and policies; and training on ARP compliant finance and program management.

(2) \$300,000 to one or more regional planning commissions, to be used through state fiscal year 2024, to establish and implement a capacity to assist local communities with specific project management needs in expending federal funds received under 42 U.S.C. 801 Sec. 603. The Regional Planning Entities shall use these resources to work with local governments to facilitate the local communities' efforts to:

(A) identify needs and top priorities for designing and building projects that are consistent with state and federal law; implement existing State, regional and local plans; and do not duplicate investments made by other federal recovery funds;

(B) respond to inquiries on eligibility and to facilitate local discussions among stakeholders on specific projects; and

(C) provide other assistance as needed from local communities in coordination with the VLCT.

* * * Other Miscellaneous Amendments * * *

Sec. 27. VERMONT CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

The amount of \$27,500.00 is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year 2021 to the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services for a grant to the Burlington Community Justice Center for the St. Joseph's Orphanage Restorative Inquiry.

Sec. 28. AUDIT OF SHERIFFS' USE OF STATE PAID DEPUTIES

The amount of \$25,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year 2021 to the Vermont State Auditor to contract for up to five audits of the use of State paid deputies by county sheriffs during the state of emergency in

calendar year 2020.

Sec. 29. HEALTHCARE WAIVERS: LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY

The Joint Fiscal Office is authorized to use available legislative appropriations including carryforward funds to engage a consultant to assist the legislative health care and fiscal committees on the policy and fiscal implications and opportunities related to the Global Commitment waiver and All Payer agreement renewals with Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

Sec. 30. 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 154, Sec. B.1123.1 is amended to read:

Sec. B.1123.1 FISCAL YEAR 2021 YEAR-END CLOSEOUT TRANSFERS

(a) At the close of fiscal year 2021, after the application of the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 308(b), and before the application of 32 V.S.A. § ~~308(e)~~ 308c up to \$5,000,000 of any remaining unreserved and undesignated end of fiscal year 2021 General Fund surplus shall be allocated as follows:

* * *

Sec. 31. 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 154, Sec. B.330 as amended by 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 3 (Budget Adjustment Act) Sec. 25 is further amended to read:

Sec. B.330 Disabilities, aging, and independent living - advocacy and independent living grants

Grants	19,375,620	19,375,620
Total	19,375,620	19,375,620
Source of funds		
General fund	7,454,782	7,454,782
Federal funds	7,748,373	7,148,466
Global Commitment fund	4,172,465	4,772,372
Total	19,375,620	19,375,620

Sec. 32. 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 154, Sec. B.346, as amended by 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 3, Sec. 30, is further amended to read:

Sec. B.346 Total human services

Source of funds

General fund	977,495,760	977,495,760
Special funds	116,403,523	116,403,523
Tobacco fund	25,088,208	25,088,208
State health care resources fund	17,078,501	17,078,501
Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund	17,774,276	17,774,276

Federal funds	1,471,852,944	1,471,253,037
Global Commitment fund	1,592,184,231	1,592,784,138
Internal service funds	1,930,685	1,930,685
Interdepartmental transfers	46,869,842	46,869,842
Permanent trust funds	25,000	25,000
Total	4,266,702,970	4,266,702,970

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 33. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on passage, except notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 214, Sec. 5 (mortgage assistance foreclosure assistance) shall take effect retroactively on January 1, 2021.

(For text see House Journal February 2, 2021)

ACTION CALENDAR

Third Reading

J.R.H. 2

Joint resolution sincerely apologizing and expressing sorrow and regret to all individual Vermonters and their families and descendants who were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices

Favorable with Amendment

H. 157

An act relating to registration of construction contractors

Rep. Troiano of Stannard, for the Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, recommends the bill be amended by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) There is currently no master list of residential construction contractors operating in the State.

(2) There is no standard process for determining or adjudicating construction contract fraud complaints either on the part of contractors or consumers.

(3) Public authorities have no mechanism to contact all contractors when necessary to provide updates to public health requirements, safe working protocols, codes and standards, and available trainings and certifications.

(4) Wide dissemination of information on codes, standards, and trainings is vital to improving construction techniques throughout the State's construction industry. Since building thermal conditioning represents over one-quarter of the State's greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy performance is a key strategy for meeting the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act, 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 153.

(5) While registration is not licensure and confers no assurance of competence, consumers have no way of knowing whether a contractor is operating legally or has been subject to civil claims or disciplinary actions.

(6) A noncommercial, standardized public listing will provide contractors an opportunity to include in their record optional third-party, State-sanctioned certifications.

Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. § 122 is amended to read:

§ 122. OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

The Office of Professional Regulation is created within the Office of the Secretary of State. The Office of Professional Regulation shall have a director who ~~shall be~~ is an exempt employee appointed by the Secretary of State ~~and shall be an exempt employee.~~ The following boards or professions are attached to the Office of Professional Regulation:

* * *

(50) Residential Contractors

Sec. 3. 26 V.S.A. chapter 107 is added to read:

CHAPTER 107. RESIDENTIAL CONTRACTORS

Subchapter 1. General Provisions

§ 5501. REGISTRATION REQUIRED

(a) A person shall register with the Office of Professional Regulation prior to contracting with a homeowner to perform residential construction in exchange for consideration of more than \$2,500.00, including labor and materials.

(b) Unless otherwise exempt under section 5502 of this title, as used in this chapter, "residential construction" means to build, demolish, or alter a residential dwelling unit, or a building or premises with four or fewer residential dwelling units, in this State, and includes interior and exterior construction, renovation, and repair; painting; paving; roofing; weatherization; installation or repair of heating, plumbing, electrical, water, or wastewater

systems; and other activities the Office specifies by rule consistent with this chapter.

§ 5502. EXEMPTIONS

This chapter does not apply to:

(1) an employee acting within the scope of his or her employment for a business organization registered under this chapter;

(2) a professional engineer, licensed architect, or a tradesperson licensed by the Department of Public Safety acting within the scope of his or her license;

(3) delivery or installation of consumer appliances, audio-visual equipment, telephone equipment, or computer network equipment;

(4) landscaping;

(5) work on a structure that is not attached to a residential building; or

(6) work that would otherwise require registration that a person performs in response to an emergency, provided the person applies for registration within a reasonable time after performing the work.

§ 5503. MANDATORY REGISTRATION AND VOLUNTARY

CERTIFICATION DISTINGUISHED

(a)(1) The system of mandatory registration established by this chapter is intended to protect against fraud, deception, breach of contract, and violations of law, but is not intended to establish standards for professional qualifications or workmanship that is otherwise lawful.

(2) The provisions of 3 V.S.A. § 129a, with respect to a registration, shall be construed in a manner consistent with the limitations of this subsection.

(b) The system of voluntary certification established in this chapter is intended to provide consumers and contractors with a publicly available, noncommercial venue for contractors to list optional approved certifications. The Director of Professional Regulation, in consultation with public safety officials and recognized associations or boards of builders, remodelers, architects, and engineers, may:

(1) adopt rules providing for the issuance of voluntary certifications, as defined in subdivision 3101a(1) of this title, that signify demonstrated competence in particular subfields and specialties related to residential construction;

(2) establish minimum qualifications, and standards for performance and conduct, necessary for certification; and

(3) discipline a certificant for violating adopted standards or other law, with or without affecting the underlying registration.

Subchapter 2. Administration

§ 5505. DUTIES OF THE DIRECTOR

(a) The Director of Professional Regulation shall:

(1) provide information to the public concerning registration, certification, appeal procedures, and complaint procedures;

(2) administer fees established under this chapter;

(3) receive applications for registration or certification, issue registrations and certifications to applicants qualified under this chapter, deny or renew registrations or certifications, and issue, revoke, suspend, condition, and reinstate registrations and certifications as ordered by an administrative law officer; and

(4) prepare and maintain a registry of registrants and certificants.

(b) The Director, after consultation with an advisor appointed pursuant to section 5506 of this title, may adopt rules to implement this chapter.

§ 5506. ADVISORS

(a) The Secretary of State shall appoint two persons pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 129b to serve as advisors in matters relating to residential contractors and construction.

(b) To be eligible to serve, an advisor shall:

(1) register under this chapter;

(2) have at least three years' experience in residential construction immediately preceding appointment; and

(3) remain active in the profession during his or her service.

(c) The Director of Professional Regulation shall seek the advice of the advisors in implementing this chapter.

§ 5507. FEES

A person regulated under this chapter shall pay the following fees at initial application and biennial renewal:

(1) Registration, individual: \$75.00.

(2) Registration, business organization: \$250.00.

(3) State certifications: \$75.00 for a first certification and \$25.00 for each additional certification.

Subchapter 3. Registrations

§ 5508. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for registration, the Director of Professional Regulation shall find that the applicant is in compliance with the provisions of this chapter and applicable State law and has satisfied any judgment order related to the provision of professional services to a homeowner.

§ 5509. REQUIREMENTS OF REGISTRANTS

(a) Insurance. A person registered under this chapter shall maintain minimum liability insurance coverage in the amount of \$300,000.00 per claim and \$1,000,000.00 aggregate, evidence of which may be required as a precondition to issuance or renewal of a registration.

(b) Writing.

(1) A person registered under this chapter shall execute a written contract prior to receiving a deposit or commencing residential construction work if the estimated value of the labor and materials exceeds \$2,500.00.

(2) A contract shall specify:

(A) Price. One of the following provisions for the price of the contract:

(i) a maximum price for all work and materials;

(ii) a statement that billing and payment will be made on a time and materials basis, not to exceed a maximum price; or

(iii) a statement that billing and payment will be made on a time and materials basis and that there is no maximum price.

(B) Work dates. Estimated start and completion dates.

(C) Scope of work. A description of the services to be performed and a description of the materials to be used.

(D) Change order provision. A description of how and when amendments to the contract may be approved and recorded.

(3) The parties shall record an amendment to the contract in a signed writing.

(c) Down payment. Unless a contract specifies that billing and payment will be made on a time and materials basis and that there is no maximum price, the contract may require a down payment of up to one-half of the contract price, or of the price of materials, whichever is greater.

§ 5510. PROHIBITIONS AND REMEDIES

(a) A person who does not register pursuant to this chapter when required engages in unauthorized practice pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 127.

(b) The Office of Professional Regulation may discipline a registrant or certificant for unprofessional conduct as provided in 3 V.S.A. § 129a, except that 3 V.S.A. § 129a(b) does not apply to a registrant.

(c) The following conduct by a registrant, certificant, applicant, or person who later becomes an applicant constitutes unprofessional conduct:

(1) failure to enter into a written contract when required by this chapter;

(2) failure to maintain liability or workers' compensation insurance as required by law;

(3) committing a deceptive act in commerce in violation of 9 V.S.A. § 2453;

(4) falsely claiming certification under this chapter, provided that this subdivision does not prevent accurate and nonmisleading advertising or statements related to credentials that are not offered by this State; and

(5) selling or fraudulently obtaining or furnishing a certificate of registration, certification, license, or any other related document or record, or assisting another person in doing so, including by reincorporating or altering a trade name for the purpose or with the effect of evading or masking revocation, suspension, or discipline against a registration issued under this chapter.

Sec. 4. IMPLEMENTATION

(a) Notwithstanding any contrary provision of 26 V.S.A. chapter 107:

(1) The initial biennial registration term for residential contractors pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 107 shall begin on April 1, 2022.

(2) The Secretary of State may begin receiving applications for the initial registration term on December 1, 2021.

(3)(A) The registration fee for individuals who submit complete registration requests between December 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022 is \$25.00 and between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, the fee is \$50.00.

(B) The registration fee for business organizations that submit complete registration requests between December 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022 is \$175.00 and between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, the fee is \$200.00.

(4) Prior to April 1, 2023, the Office of Professional Regulation shall not take any enforcement action for unauthorized practice under 26 V.S.A. § 5510(a) against a residential contractor who fails to register as required by this act.

(b) On or before July 1, 2022, the Director of Professional Regulation shall establish an initial set of voluntary certifications, to include at minimum OSHA standards on construction projects and components of energy-efficient “green” building for insulators, carpenters, and heating and ventilation installers.

Sec. 5. CREATION OF POSITIONS WITHIN THE OFFICE OF
PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; LICENSING.

(a) There are created within the Secretary of State’s Office of Professional Regulation one new position in licensing and one position in enforcement.

(b) Any funding necessary to support the positions created in subsection (a) of this section and the implementation of 26 V.S.A. chapter 107 created in Sec. 2 of this act shall be derived from the Office’s Professional Regulatory Fee Fund and not from the General Fund.

Sec. 6. SECRETARY OF STATE; STATUS REPORT

On or before January 15, 2023, the Office of Professional Regulation shall report to the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs and on Government Operations and to the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations concerning the implementation of 26 V.S.A. chapter 107, including:

- (1) the number of registrations and certifications;
 - (2) the resources necessary to implement the chapter;
 - (3) the number and nature of any complaints or enforcement actions;
- and
- (4) any other issues the Office deems appropriate.

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.

(Committee Vote: 9-2-0)

Rep. Masland of Thetford, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommends the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs and when further amended as follows:

First: In section 5501, in subsection (a), by striking out “\$2,500.00” and inserting in lieu thereof “\$3,500.00”

Second: In section 5502, in subdivision (2), following “license” by inserting “, or a contractor whose work is regulated by the Public Utility Commission”

(Committee Vote: 7-4-0)

Rep. Townsend of South Burlington, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommends the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committees on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, and Ways and Means, and when further amended as follows:

By striking out Sec. 5, creation of positions within the Office of Professional Regulation; licensing, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 5. CREATION OF POSITIONS WITHIN THE OFFICE OF
PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; LICENSING.

(a) There are created within the Secretary of State’s Office of Professional Regulation one new position in licensing and one new position in enforcement.

(b) In fiscal year 2022, the amount of \$200,000.00 in special funds is appropriated to the Secretary of State to fund the positions created in subsection (a) of this section.

(Committee Vote: 7-4-0)

Amendment to be offered by Rep. Higley of Lowell to the recommendation of amendment of the Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs to H. 157

That the bill be amended in Sec. 3 as follows:

First: By striking out 26 V.S.A. § 5509 in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new section 5509 to read:

§ 5509. REQUIREMENTS OF REGISTRANTS

A person registered under this chapter shall maintain minimum liability insurance coverage in the amount of \$300,000.00 per claim and \$1,000,000.00

aggregate, evidence of which may be required as a precondition to issuance or renewal of a registration.

Second: In 26 V.S.A. § 5510(c) by striking out subdivision (1) in its entirety and re-designating the remaining subdivisions to be numerically correct.

Favorable

H. 227

An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the City of Winooski

Rep. Conlon of Cornwall, for the Committee on Education, recommends the bill ought to pass.

(Committee Vote: 8-3-0)

Consent Calendar

Concurrent Resolutions

The following concurrent resolutions have been introduced for approval by the Senate and House and will be adopted automatically unless a Senator or Representative requests floor consideration before the end of the session of the next legislative day. Requests for floor consideration in either chamber should be communicated to the Secretary's office and/or the House Clerk's office, respectively. For text of resolutions, see Addendum to Senate Calendar.

S.C.R. 2

Senate concurrent resolution honoring former Franklin Selectboard Chair Peter Magnant for his exemplary civic leadership.

S.C.R. 3

Senate concurrent resolution honoring former Franklin Selectboard member Yvon Dandurand for his outstanding public service.

Information Notice

Grants and Positions that have been submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committee by the Administration, under 32 V.S.A. §5(b)

JFO #3039 - \$1,000,000 to the VT Dept of Public Safety from the U.S. Dept of Justice to develop and implement approaches to address a range of criminal justice system problems. The majority of funds will be awarded as sub-grants to organizations with expertise in this subject matter. *[JFO received 3/3/2021]*

JFO #3040 - Two (2) limited service positions, both Financial Manager I, to ensure financial record compliance for the anticipated \$200 million in COVID-19 related public assistance awards to the VT Agency of Human Services from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Positions will be funded through previously approved JFO grant #3015. *[Note: Grant #3015 is a public assistance grant to reimburse eligible costs borne by state, local and non-profit entities in the COVID-19 emergency response – further info can be found here: https://ljfo.vermont.gov/custom_reports/grants/default.html]* *[JFO received 3/8/2021, expedited review requested on 3/9/2021]*

JFO #3041 - \$100,000 to the VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife from Ducks Unlimited to fund a 25-year stewardship of 136 acres in Addison County. The land was donated by Ducks Unlimited with the condition that the Department perform stewardship duties. The yearly projected cost in materials and staff time is \$4,000. *[JFO received 3/08/2021]*

JFO #3042 - \$50,000 to the VT Judiciary from the State Justice Institute to secure consulting services of the National Center for State Courts to advise on the creation of an Access and Resource Center (ARC) which would serve self-represented parties and others looking for support navigating the justice process. *[Note: The budget materials include a \$5,000 Judiciary cash match and \$20,000 of in-kind match.]* *[JFO received 3/08/2021]*