

House Calendar

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

91st DAY OF THE BIENNIAL SESSION

House Convenes at 10:00 A.M.

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Action Postponed Until April 6, 2021

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)

Amendment to be offered by Rep. Masland of Thetford in substitution for the report of the Committee on Ways and Means to H. 157

Representative Masland of Thetford moves to substitute a recommendation of amendment for the recommendation of amendment of the Committee on Ways and Means by recommending that the report of the Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs be amended in Sec. 3, 26 V.S.A. chapter 107, as follows:

First: In section 5501, in subsection (a) and in section 5509, subsection (b), in subdivision (1), 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 person performing work for the installation of a net-metered solar system pursuant to a certificate of public good issued by the Public Utilities Commission”

Rep. Townsend of South Burlington, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommends the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee 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.

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)

Amendment to be offered by Reps. Hooper of Montpelier, Fagan of Rutland City, Feltus of Lyndon, Helm of Fair Haven, Jessup of Middlesex, Scheu of Middlebury, Squirrell of Underhill, Toleno of Brattleboro, Townsend of South Burlington and Yacovone of Morristown to H. 315

That the House concur in the Senate proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto by striking out 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), Pub. L. No. 117-2, in the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, 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 Committees on Appropriations, 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 Commissioner shall maximize the use of Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) funds where expenses are eligible, and the use of FEMA funds does not delay or inhibit the purpose of the funded program or activity. To the extent that FEMA funding is used, the Commissioner shall reduce funding to the extent that FEMA resources reduce the need for appropriated resources.

(c) The appropriations in this act 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 (ARPA), the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund, and the Coronavirus Capital Projects 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 ARPA shall be spent subject to appropriation.

Sec. 1b. REPORTING BY ENTITIES OUTSIDE STATE
GOVERNMENT ON USE OF FUNDS

Any recipient state agency that grants funds appropriated in this act to a non-state recipient shall require that recipient to report on the specific uses of the funds on or before November 1, 2021. Granting agencies shall compile and report on the use these funds to the General Assembly by December 1, 2021.

Sec. 1c. INTENT REGARDING FUTURE STATE FUNDING

The purpose of funding appropriated from ARPA in this act is related to addressing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as making investments for a sustained economic recovery. The appropriation of these funds is not intended to create a future funding commitment from other State funds.

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 by 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 any agency or department for CRF eligible public safety payroll and benefits costs or other eligible CRF costs and the same amount of General Fund appropriated shall be reverted. To the extent

there are insufficient CRF eligible costs in fiscal year 2021, any remaining reverted CRF balance shall be appropriated and carried forward to any agency or department with eligible CRF costs in fiscal year 2022 where an equal amount of general funds shall be reverted in fiscal year 2022 though the budget adjustment process.

(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 appropriations to the Department of Corrections and other departments with eligible CRF costs; and the General Fund reversions 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 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding applications and awards are impacting these estimates. The Commissioner shall provide an update on these amounts to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its meeting in July 2021.

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

Sec. 3. ECONOMIC RECOVERY BRIDGE GRANTS

(a) Purpose.

(1) The purpose of this section is to provide bridge funding to businesses that suffered a tax loss in 2020 and require immediate State aid, either to remain open or to reopen the business, until additional federal funds can be deployed and until the economic recovery provides a more stable stream of revenue to support business operations.

(2) The funding in this section is primarily intended for businesses that have not received prior State or federal financial assistance. Because these businesses have not benefited from State or federal programs, they are eligible for grants that will provide funding for fixed operating costs or a threshold amount in order to ensure they remain viable.

(3) To the extent that funds remain available, businesses that have already received prior State or federal assistance may receive grants under the program, with priority for those businesses that, after adding to the business's income the amount of any nontaxable COVID-19-related direct financial assistance from State or federal sources, the business still would have suffered a tax loss.

(b) Appropriation.

(1) 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 grants to eligible businesses pursuant to this act.

(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.

(3) The Agency shall make best reasonable efforts to conduct outreach, provide information, and provide necessary assistance for women- and BIPOC-owned businesses to access grant funds.

(c) 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:

(A) is open at the time of application and attests that it will use grant funds for business-related operations and economic recovery; or

(B)(i) is closed at the time of application due to the COVID-19 public health emergency;

(ii) attests that it will use grant funds for resuming its business operations and economic recovery; and

(iii) submits a brief written description of its good faith plan to reopen.

(4) The business suffered a tax loss due to the COVID-19 public health emergency as evidenced by its federal 2020 income tax return.

(5) The business complies with current State health and safety protocols established by Executive Order.

(d) Amount of grant.

(1) A grant shall not exceed the lesser of:

(A) 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

(B) \$150,000.00.

(2) The Agency may reduce the amount of a grant pursuant to guidelines it adopts for that purpose based on the amount of any COVID-19-related direct financial assistance that the business has received from State or federal sources.

(e) Grant administration; priorities.

(1) Beginning on the date the Agency begins accepting applications, for an initial 30-day period, the Agency may accept applications from eligible businesses but shall award grants only to eligible businesses that have not received any COVID-19-related direct financial assistance from State or federal sources.

(2) After the initial 30-day period, the Agency shall continue to accept applications and award grants consistent with the following:

(A) The Agency shall give first priority to eligible businesses that have not received any COVID-19-related direct financial assistance from State or federal sources.

(B) The Agency shall give subsequent priority to eligible businesses that, after adding to the business's income the amount of any nontaxable COVID-19-related direct financial assistance from State or federal sources, the business still would have suffered a tax loss.

(f) 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 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

(g) 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;

(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.

(h) 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 (e)(1) of this section; and

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

(i) 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.

(j) 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 (g) of this section.

Sec. 3a. 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 the 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 and for new businesses started by individuals who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic through layoffs, furloughs, reduced hours, or due to being employed in an industry that has been severely affected.

* * * Housing and Homeowner Assistance * * *

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

The sum of \$10,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund 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 the 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 disability or 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 designated community mental health 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 of the funds appropriated in this section is limited to addressing the impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the appropriation of these funds is 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

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 of funds to this population pursuant to 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

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 FEMA funds will be awarded for this purpose. At the Agency’s discretion, 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

(a) Afterschool and Summer Programs: In fiscal year 2021 and to be carried forward, the sum of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from federal funds for Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSR) provided in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Section 2001(f) to the Agency of Education to be used for grants to afterschool and summer programs. At least \$2,000,000 of these grants shall be made with consultation from and approval of the Child Development Division in the Department for Children and Families. These funds shall be used to fulfill requirements specified in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(2) and (3).

(b) Summer Meals: In fiscal year 2021 and to be carried forward, the sum of \$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 FEMA funds will be awarded for this purpose.

Sec. 17. PRACTICAL NURSE; WORKFORCE FUNDING

(a) Due to the increasing challenge of the pandemic on the health professions, 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 shall 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 shall be 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) For Vermonters whose employability or employer has been impacted by the Coronavirus since March of 2020, 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

Due to the economic impact of the pandemic on the families of recent high school graduates, 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 of 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.

Sec. 20. [Deleted.]

* * * Public Service; Broadband * * *

Sec. 21. BROADBAND ALLOCATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS

(a) Coronavirus Relief Fund 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 monies 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 a broadband infrastructure program to assist Communications Union Districts (CUD) with preconstruction costs and general support services. Applicants may be:

(A) an individual CUD,

(B) a group of CUDs working together on a single project, or

(C) an external partner working with a single CUD or group of CUDs.

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

(A) contract services 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 grants related to slaughter, meat processing and meat processing training proposals.

(2) \$5,000,000.00 to the 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. Including two classified limited service positions to be established in the Department of Environmental Conservation - one (1) environmental analyst and one (1) grant management specialist.

(2) \$5,000,000.00 to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC);

(3) \$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.

* * * Annual Link to Federal Statutes * * *

Sec. 23. 32 V.S.A. § 5824 is amended to read:

§ 5824. ADOPTION OF FEDERAL INCOME TAX LAWS

The statutes of the United States relating to the federal income tax, as in effect on December 31, ~~2019~~ 2020, but without regard to federal income tax rates under 26 U.S.C. § 1, are hereby adopted for the purpose of computing the tax liability under this chapter, and shall continue in effect as adopted until amended, repealed, or replaced by act of the General Assembly.

Sec. 23a. 32 V.S.A. § 7402(8) is amended to read:

(8) “Laws of the United States” means the U.S. Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended through December 31, ~~2019~~ 2020, which shall continue in effect as adopted until amended, repealed, or replaced by act of the General Assembly. As used in this chapter, “Internal Revenue Code” has the same meaning as “laws of the United States” as defined in this subdivision.

Sec. 23b. ARPA EXCLUSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION
FROM GROSS INCOME; TAX YEAR 2020

(a) For taxable year 2020 only, 32 V.S.A. § 5824, adoption of federal income tax laws, shall also adopt 26 U.S.C. § 85(c) as amended by Section 9042 of the American Rescue Plan Act, Pub. L. No. 117-2, pursuant to which the first \$10,200.00 of unemployment compensation received is excluded from the gross income of a taxpayer whose taxable year 2020 adjusted gross income is less than \$150,000.00.

(b) For taxable year 2020 only, notwithstanding 26 U.S.C. § 85(c) as amended by Section 9042 of the American Rescue Plan Act, Pub. L. No. 117-2, the definition of household income pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 6061(4)(A) and (5) shall include all unemployment compensation received by a taxpayer in taxable year 2020.

Sec. 23c. EXCLUSION OF FORGIVEN PAYCHECK PROTECTION
PROGRAM LOANS FROM GROSS INCOME

Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 5824 and any other provision of law to the contrary, the exclusion of income associated with the forgiveness of a covered Paycheck Protection Program loan from gross income pursuant to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Pub. L.

No. 116-136, § 1106(i), as amended, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, § 276 shall not be allowed in computing taxable income under 32 V.S.A. chapter 151. As used in this section, “covered loan” has the same meaning as in the CARES Act, § 1106(a), as amended. Nothing in this section shall affect the deduction of expenses to the extent that payment of the expenses results in forgiveness of a covered loan pursuant to the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136, § 1106, as amended, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, § 276.

Sec. 24. FISCAL YEAR 2021 CONTINGENT USE OF RESERVE

(a) In fiscal year 2021, if the General Fund is found to have an undesignated fund deficit, the Commissioner of Finance and Management is authorized to transfer not more than \$12,600,000.00 from the Human Services Caseload Reserve established in 32 V.S.A. § 308b to offset the undesignated fund deficit prior to making a transfer in accordance with 32 V.S.A. § 308(c).

(b) If a transfer from the Human Services Caseload Reserve is made pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, then the Commissioner of Finance and Management shall recommend to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations that the same amount be transferred from the General Fund to the Human Services Caseload Reserve Fund in the fiscal year 2022 budget adjustment process.

* * * Technical Assistance * * *

Sec. 25. [Deleted]

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 establish a support program through State fiscal year 2024 for the use of federal funds received under 42 U.S.C. 801 § 603, the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. These resources shall be used 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 funds received pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 801 § 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) \$300,000.00 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 § 603. The regional planning commissions 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 grantee chosen in subsection (a) of this section.

* * * Other Miscellaneous Amendments * * *

Sec. 27. VERMONT CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

The sum 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 sum 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 or reviews 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 House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare to consider the policy and fiscal implications and opportunities related

to renegotiation of the State's Global Commitment to Health Medicaid Section 1115 demonstration and continuation of the All Payer ACO Model agreement with the Centers 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	<u>19,375,620</u>	<u>19,375,620</u>
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	<u>4,172,465</u>	<u>4,772,372</u>
Total	19,375,620	19,375,620

Sec. 32. 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 154, Sec. B.330 as amended by 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 3 Sec. 28 is further amended to read:

Sec. B.338 Corrections - correctional services

Personal services	115,752,606	115,752,606
Operating expenses	23,059,297	23,059,297
Grants	<u>8,808,427</u>	<u>8,808,427</u>
Total	147,620,330	147,620,330
Source of funds		
General fund	135,553,733	128,553,733

Special funds	935,963	935,963
Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund	4,950,000	11,950,000
Federal funds	473,523	473,523
Global Commitment fund	5,310,796	5,310,796
Interdepartmental transfers	<u>396,315</u>	<u>396,315</u>
Total	147,620,330	147,620,330

Sec. 32a. 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	970,495,760
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	24,774,276
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	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>
Total	4,266,702,970	4,266,702,970

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 33. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on passage, except that, notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 214:

(1) Sec. 5 (mortgage assistance foreclosure assistance) shall take effect retroactively on January 1, 2021;

(2) Secs. 23–23b (annual link to federal statutes) shall take effect retroactively on January 1, 2021 and shall apply to taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2020; and

(3) Sec. 23c (forgiven Paycheck Protection Program loan exclusion) shall take effect retroactively on January 1, 2021 and shall apply to taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2021.

ACTION CALENDAR

Favorable with Amendment

S. 18

An act relating to limiting earned good time sentence reductions for offenders convicted of certain crimes

Rep. Sullivan of Dorset, for the Committee on Corrections and Institutions, recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 5321 is amended to read:

§ 5321. APPEARANCE BY VICTIM

* * *

(d) At or before the sentencing hearing, the prosecutor's office shall instruct the victim of a listed crime, in all cases where the court imposes a sentence that includes a period of incarceration, that a sentence of incarceration is to the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and that the Commissioner of Corrections has the authority to affect the actual time the defendant shall serve in incarceration through ~~good~~ earned time credit, furlough, work-release, and other early release programs. In addition, the prosecutor's office shall explain the significance of a minimum and maximum sentence to the victim ~~and shall also~~, explain the function of parole and how it may affect the actual amount of time the defendant may be incarcerated, and inform the victim of the maximum amount of earned time that the defendant could accrue and that earned time only affects when a defendant is eligible for parole consideration but does not necessarily result in the defendant's release.

* * *

Sec. 2. 28 V.S.A. § 818 is amended to read:

§ 818. EARNED ~~GOOD~~ TIME; REDUCTION OF TERM

(a) On or before September 1, 2020, the Department of Corrections shall file a proposed rule pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 implementing an earned ~~good~~ time program to become effective on January 1, 2021. The Commissioner shall adopt rules to carry out the provisions of this section as an emergency rule and concurrently propose them as a permanent rule. The

emergency rule shall be deemed to meet the standard for the adoption of emergency rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 844(a).

(b) The earned ~~good~~ time program implemented pursuant to this section shall comply with the following standards:

(1) The program shall be available for all sentenced offenders, including furloughed offenders, provided that the program shall not be available to offenders on probation or parole, to offenders eligible for a reduction of term pursuant to section 811 of this title, to offenders sentenced to serve an interrupted sentence, or to offenders sentenced to life without parole. Offenders currently serving a sentence shall be eligible to begin earning a reduction in term when the earned ~~good~~ time program becomes effective. Notwithstanding this subdivision (1), when an offender has been convicted of a disqualifying offense, the offender's ability to participate and earn time in the program shall be determined pursuant to subdivision (5) of this subsection.

(2) Offenders shall earn a reduction of seven days in the minimum and maximum sentence for each month during which the offender:

(A) is not adjudicated of a major disciplinary rule violation; and

(B) is not reincarcerated from the community for a violation of release conditions, provided that an offender who loses a residence for a reason other than fault on the part of the offender shall not be deemed reincarcerated under this subdivision.

(3) An offender who receives post-adjudication treatment in a residential setting for a substance use disorder shall earn a reduction of one day in the minimum and maximum sentence for each day that the offender receives the inpatient treatment. While a person is in residential substance abuse treatment, he or she shall not be eligible for ~~good~~ earned time except as provided in this subsection.

(4) The Department shall:

(A) ensure that all victims of record are notified of the earned ~~good~~ time program at its outset and made aware of the option to receive notifications from the Department pursuant to this subdivision;

(B) provide timely notice not less frequently than every 90 days to the offender any time the offender receives a reduction in his or her term of supervision pursuant to this section;

(C) maintain a system that documents and records all such reductions in each offender's permanent record; and

(D) record any reduction in an offender's term of supervision pursuant to this section on a monthly basis and ensure that victims who want information regarding changes in scheduled release dates have access to such information.

(5) Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 214, an offender who was serving a sentence for a disqualifying offense on January 1, 2021 shall not earn any earned time sentence reductions under this section after the effective date of this act. This subdivision (5) shall not be construed to limit or affect earned time that an offender has earned on or before the effective date of this act.

(c) As used in this section:

(1) "Disqualifying offense" means:

(A) murder in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2301;

(B) voluntary manslaughter in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2304;

(C) kidnapping in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2405;

(D) lewd and lascivious conduct with a child in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2602, provided that the offense shall not be considered a disqualifying offense if the offender is under 18 years of age, the child is at least 12 years of age, and the conduct is consensual;

(E) sexual assault in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 3252(a) or (b);

(F) aggravated sexual assault in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 3253; or

(G) aggravated sexual assault of a child in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 3253a.

(2) "Interrupted sentence" means a sentence that is not served continuously, including a sentence to be served in intervals or a sentence to the work crew.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

(Committee vote: 10-1-0)

(For text see Senate Journal February 17, 2021)

NOTICE CALENDAR
Favorable with Amendment
H. 265

An act relating to the Office of the Child Advocate

Rep. Noyes of Wolcott, for the Committee on Human Services, recommends the bill be amended by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 33 V.S.A. chapter 32 is added to read:

CHAPTER 32. OFFICE OF THE CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY
ADVOCATE

§ 3201. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Child, Youth, and Family Advocate” or “Advocate” means an individual who leads the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate.

(2) “Department” means the Department for Children and Families.

(3) “Office” means the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate.

(4) “State agency” means any office, department, board, bureau, division, agency, or instrumentality of the State.

§ 3202. OFFICE OF THE CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY ADVOCATE

(a) There is established the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate for the purpose of advancing the interests and welfare of Vermont’s children and youths receiving services from the Department in a manner that addresses racial and social equity, including providing transparent and impartial oversight of the child protection and juvenile justice systems and promoting reforms necessary to better serve Vermont’s children, youths, and families. The Office shall act independently of any State agency in the performance of its duties.

(b) The Office shall:

(1) work in collaboration with relevant parties to strengthen the Department’s services for children, youths, and families;

(2) analyze and monitor the development and implementation of federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and policies relating to child, youth, and family welfare and recommend changes when appropriate;

(3) review systemic issues in the Department's provision of services to children and youths that may exist and complaints concerning the actions of the Department and of any entity that provides services to children, youths, and families through funds provided by the Department; make appropriate referrals; and investigate those complaints where the Advocate determines that a child, youth, or family may be in need of assistance from the Office;

(4) support children, youths, and families by providing information about recipients' rights and responsibilities related to Departmental services;

(5) review current systems to determine to what extent children and youths placed in the custody of the Department or who are receiving services under the supervision of the Department receive humane and dignified treatment at all times, including consideration by the Advocate as to what extent the system protects and enhances the child's or youth's personal dignity, right to privacy, and right to appropriate health care and education in accordance with State and federal law;

(6) provide systemic information concerning child, youth, and family welfare to the public, the Governor, State agencies, legislators, and others, as necessary; and

(7) notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), submit to the General Assembly and the Governor on or before December 1 of each year a report addressing services provided by the Department:

(A) the quality of services provided to children, youths, and families;

(B) conditions of placements for children and youths in Vermont;

(C) systemic findings related to services for and assistance to children, youths, and families within the child protection and juvenile justice systems;

(D) recommendations related to improving services for children, youths, and families; and

(E) data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, disability status, and any other categories that the Advocate deems necessary; and

(8) address any challenges accessing information or records that are necessary for carrying out the provisions of this chapter.

(c) The Office shall be allowed to accept philanthropic contributions for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this chapter.

§ 3203. CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY ADVOCATE

(a) The Office shall be directed by the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate, an individual who shall be qualified by reason of education, expertise, and experience and who may have a professional degree in law, social work, public health, or a related field. The Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall serve on a full-time basis and shall be exempt from classified service.

(b)(1) The Oversight Commission on Children, Youths, and Families established pursuant to section 3212 of this chapter shall recommend qualified applicants for the position of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate to the Governor for consideration. Subject to confirmation by the Senate, the Governor shall appoint an Advocate from among those applicants recommended by the Oversight Commission for a term of four years. The appointment for Advocate shall be made without regard to political affiliation and on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability. The Advocate shall hold office until reappointed or until a successor is appointed.

(2) The Governor, upon a majority vote of Oversight Commission, may remove the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate for cause, which includes only neglect of duty, gross misconduct, conviction of a crime, or inability to perform the responsibilities of the Office. The Governor's reason for removing the Advocate shall be published electronically on the website of the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate, and the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore shall simultaneously receive notification. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointment process set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(c) The Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall appoint a Deputy Child, Youth, and Family Advocate, whose duties shall be performed at the direction of the Advocate.

(d) Upon any vacancy in the position of the Advocate, and until such time as a replacement is appointed and confirmed, the Deputy Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall serve as the acting Child, Youth, and Family Advocate. The acting Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall have the full responsibilities of the Advocate and entitled to the same compensation as the outgoing Child, Youth, and Family Advocate.

§ 3204. CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL

(a) Purpose and membership. The Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall convene an Advisory Council composed of stakeholders who have been impacted by child welfare services provided by the Department for Children and Families. The Advisory Council's membership shall reflect the growing diversity of Vermont's children and families, including individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color, as well as with regard to

socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender, sexual identity, and disability status. Members shall provide advice and guidance to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate regarding the administration and operation of the Office.

(b) Confidentiality. In seeking the advice and guidance of the Advisory Council, the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall not disclose to the Advisory Council, or any member thereof, individually identifiable information about a child or youth unless the information is already known to the public.

(c) Compensation. Members of the Advisory Council shall be compensated in accordance with the policies adopted by the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate and per diems or reimbursement of expenses, or both, shall be dispersed from the Office's budget.

§ 3205. INCIDENTS AND FATALITIES

(a) The Department shall provide the Office with a copy of all reports related to actual physical injury to children or youths in the custody of the Commissioner or a significant risk of such harm.

(b) The Department shall provide the Office with a written report within 48 hours of:

(1) any fatality of a child or youth in its custody; and

(2) the restraint or seclusion of any child or youth in its custody.

§ 3206. ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate and the Deputy Advocate shall, upon request, have timely access, including the right to inspect and copy, any records necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter, including relevant records produced and held by State entities and third parties.

(b) The Child, Youth, and Family Advocate and Deputy Advocate may communicate privately and visit with any child or youth who is in the custody of the Department. The Advocate or Deputy Advocate shall obtain the consent of a parent or guardian prior to communicating or visiting with a child or youth who is not in the custody of the Department.

(c) Facilities and providers delivering services to children and youths shall permit the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or the Deputy Advocate to access their facilities and to communicate privately and visit with children and youths for whom they provide services.

§ 3207. COOPERATION OF STATE AGENCIES

All State agencies shall comply with reasonable requests of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate and Deputy Advocate for information and assistance.

§ 3208. CONFIDENTIALITY

(a) The Office shall maintain the confidentiality of all case records, third-party records, and court records, as well as any information gathered in the course of investigations and systems monitoring duties. These records are exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of this section.

(b) In the course of carrying out the provisions of this chapter, if the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or Deputy Advocate reasonably believes that the health, safety, or welfare of a child or youth is at imminent risk, the Advocate or Deputy Advocate may disclose relevant documents or information to any of the individuals or entities listed in subdivision 4921(e)(1) of this title. Determinations of relevancy shall be made by the Advocate.

(c) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or Deputy Advocate may publicly disclose any patterns of conduct or repeated incidents identified by the Advocate or Deputy Advocate in carrying out the provisions of this chapter if the Advocate or Deputy Advocate reasonably believes that public disclosure is likely to mitigate a risk posed to the health, safety, and welfare of a child or youth, except the Advocate or Deputy Advocate shall not publicly disclose either of the following:

(1) individually identifiable information about a child or youth unless the information is already known to the public; and

(2) investigation findings where there is a pending law enforcement investigation or prosecution.

§ 3209. IMMUNITY

No civil liability shall attach to the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or Deputy Advocate for good faith performance of the duties imposed by this chapter.

§ 3210. INTERFERENCE AND RETALIATION

(a) A person who intentionally hinders a representative of the Office acting pursuant to this chapter shall be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$5,000.00, or both.

(b) A person who takes discriminatory, disciplinary, or retaliatory action against an employee or a volunteer of a State agency, facility, or provider serving children or youths for any communication made or information disclosed to aid the Office in carrying out its duties and responsibilities shall be imprisoned not more than one year or fined not more than \$5,000.00, or both. Any employee or volunteer of a State agency, facility, or provider may seek damages in Superior Court against a person who takes an action prohibited by this subsection.

§ 3211. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Child, Youth, and Family Advocate and the Advocate's employees and contractors shall not have any conflict of interest with the Department or with any entity that provides services to children, youths, and families through funds provided by the Department relating to the performance of their responsibilities under this chapter. For the purposes of this section, a conflict of interest exists whenever the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or the Advocate's employees or contractors:

(1) has direct involvement in the licensing, certification, or accreditation of a provider or facility delivering services to children, youths, and families;

(2) has a direct ownership interest in a provider or facility delivering services to children, youths, and families;

(3) is employed by or participates in the management of a provider or facility delivering services to children, youths, and families; or

(4) receives or has the right to receive, directly or indirectly, remuneration under a compensation arrangement with a provider or facility delivering services to children, youths, and families.

§ 3212. OVERSIGHT COMMISSION ON CHILDREN, YOUTHS, AND

FAMILIES

(a) Creation. There is created the Oversight Commission on Children, Youths, and Families to provide guidance and recommendations to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate.

(b) Membership. The Commission shall be composed of the following members who shall not have a conflict of interest with the Department for Children and Families:

(1) one current member of the House of Representatives who serves on the House Committee on Human Services, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(2) one current member of the Senate who serves on the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(3) a member with professional expertise in childhood trauma, adverse childhood experiences, or child welfare, who shall be appointed by the Governor;

(4) the Executive Director of Racial Equity established pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 5001 or designee;

(5) one member of a child advocacy group, board, or commission, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(6) one member of a child advocacy group, board, or commission, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(7) one member of a child advocacy group, board, or commission, who shall be appointed by the Governor;

(8) an adult who was in the custody of the Department for Children and Families within the past five years, who shall be appointed by the Vermont Foster and Adoptive Family Association; and

(9) the relative caregiver of a child or youth involved in the child protection system, who shall be appointed by Vermont Kin as Parents.

(c) Powers and duties. The Commission shall:

(1) recommend qualified applicants for the position of Child, Youth, and Family Advocate to the Governor for consideration pursuant to section 3203 of this chapter; and

(2) provide oversight of the Office in its efforts to support an equitable, comprehensive, and coordinated system of services and programs for children, youths, and families.

(d) Assistance. The Commission shall have the administrative assistance of the Agency of Administration.

(e) Meetings.

(1) The member representing the House Committee on Human Services shall call the first meeting of the Commission to occur on or before August 1, 2021.

(2) The Commission shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Commission serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than four meetings annually.

(2) Other members of the Commission shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than four meetings annually. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate.

Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 4921 is amended to read:

§ 4921. DEPARTMENT'S RECORDS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

* * *

(d) Upon request, Department records created under this subchapter shall be disclosed to:

* * *

(4) law enforcement officers engaged in a joint investigation with the Department, an Assistant Attorney General, or a State's Attorney; ~~and~~

(5) other State agencies conducting related inquiries or proceedings; and

(6) the Office of the Child, Youth, Family Advocate for the purpose of carrying out the provisions in chapter 32 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. § 5117 is amended to read:

§ 5117. RECORDS OF JUVENILE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

* * *

(b)(1) Notwithstanding the foregoing, inspection of such records and files by the following is not prohibited:

* * *

(H) the Office of the Child, Youth, Family Advocate for the purpose of carrying out the provisions in chapter 32 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 4. OFFICE OF THE CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY ADVOCATE;
DUTIES; TEMPORARY LIMITATION

Notwithstanding 33 V.S.A. § 3202(b), the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall only assume responsibility for the duties listed in subdivisions (1) and (2) of subsection (b) through June 30, 2022. The Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate shall assume full responsibility of all duties listed in 33 V.S.A. § 3202(b) beginning on July 1, 2022.

Sec. 5. TRANSITION

The initial term of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate established pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 32 shall begin on or before January 1, 2022.

Sec. 6. APPROPRIATION

The sum of \$ 110,000.00 is appropriated to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate from the General Fund in fiscal year 2022 for carrying out the purposes of this act.

Sec. 7. REPEAL; JOINT LEGISLATIVE CHILD PROTECTION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

2015 Acts and Resolves No. 60, Sec. 23 as amended by 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 207, Sec. 2 is repealed.

Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021, except that Secs. 2 (Department's records of abuse and neglect), 3 (records of juvenile judicial proceedings), 5 (Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate; duties; temporary limitation), and 6 (appropriation) shall take effect on January 1, 2022.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate"

(Committee Vote: 11-0-0)

Favorable

S. 60

An act relating to allowing municipal and cooperative utilities to offer innovative rates and services

Rep. Patt of Worcester, for the Committee on Energy and Technology, recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence.

(Committee Vote: 9-0-0)

(For text see Senate Journal March 19, 2021)

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 #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://lifo.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]*