

# Journal of the House

Thursday, March 18, 2021

At one o'clock and fifteen minutes in the afternoon Rep. Long of Newfane called the House to order.

## Devotional Exercises

A moment of silence was held in lieu of a devotion.

## Senate Bills Referred

Senate bills of the following titles were severally taken up, read the first time, and referred as follows:

### S. 7

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to expanding access to expungement and sealing of criminal history records;

To the Committee on Judiciary.

### S. 78

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to binding interest arbitration for employees of the Vermont Judiciary;

To the Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs.

## Bill Referred to Committee on Appropriations

### H. 159

House bill, entitled

An act relating to creating the Better Places Program

Appearing on the Calendar for Notice, and pursuant to Rule 35(a), carrying an appropriation, was referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

**Speaker Krowinski** presiding.

## Third Reading; Bills Passed

House bills of the following titles were severally taken up, read the third time, and passed:

**H. 87**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to establishing a classification system for criminal offenses

**H. 145**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to amending the standards for law enforcement use of force

**H. 154**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the failure of municipal officers to accept office

**Action on Bill Postponed****H. 218**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the sale of unpasteurized raw milk

Was taken up and pending the reading of the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, on motion of **Rep. Surprenant of Barnard**, action on the bill was postponed until March 19, 2021.

**Third Reading; Bill Passed****H. 428**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to hate-motivated crimes and misconduct

Was taken up, read the third time, and passed.

**Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered****H. 101**

**Rep. Webb of Shelburne** for the Committee on Education, to which had been referred House bill entitled,

An act relating to the implementation of 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173 by providing grant funding to build systems-driven, sustainable literacy support for all students with measurable outcomes

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this act is to provide assistance to supervisory unions in their implementation of 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173 by providing grant funding to build systems-driven, sustainable literacy support for all students with measurable outcomes.

## Sec. 2. FINDINGS

(a) In 2016 Acts and Resolves No. 148, the General Assembly directed the Agency of Education to contract with a consulting firm to review current practices and recommend best practices for the delivery of special education services in school districts. The Agency of Education contracted with the District Management Group, which issued in November 2017 its report entitled “Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports for Students who Struggle” (Report).

(b) This Report made the following five recommendations on best practices for the delivery of special education services:

(1) ensure core instruction meets most needs of most students;

(2) provide additional instructional time outside core subjects to students who struggle rather than providing interventions instead of core instruction;

(3) ensure students who struggle receive all instruction from highly skilled teachers;

(4) create or strengthen a systems-wide approach to supporting positive student behaviors based on expert support; and

(5) provide specialized instruction from skilled and trained experts to students with more intensive needs.

(c) In enacting 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, the General Assembly’s goal was to enhance the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to all students who require additional support in Vermont’s school districts, recognizing that changing the models for delivery of services and funding for students who require additional support is a significant change for school systems and their constituencies and that they will require time and assistance in making necessary accommodations.

(d) In Act 173, the General Assembly provided additional staff and resources to the Agency of Education to support its work with supervisory unions and schools that are transitioning to the best practices recommended in the Report.

(e) Further support for supervisory unions and schools that are transitioning to the best practices recommended in the Report are necessary,

particularly in the area of teaching literacy to students in prekindergarten through grade 3, given that proficiency in reading is an essential foundational skill for educational success.

(f) According to the 2019 assessment of reading proficiency by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 37 percent of Vermont students in fourth grade were proficient in reading, and that percentage has declined from 2002 (39 percent) and 2017 (43 percent).

(g) Ensuring that students in prekindergarten through grade 3 learn to read at a proficient level advances the best practices recommended in the Report, in particular ensuring core instruction meets most needs of most students and ensuring that students who struggle receive all instruction from highly skilled teachers.

### Sec. 3. LITERACY GRANT PROGRAM

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Eligible applicant” means a supervisory union, or, if multiple supervisory unions choose to collaborate in applying together for the grant funding, those supervisory unions.

(2) “Grant” means a grant provided under this section.

(3) “Participating supervisory union” means each supervisory union that applies for the grant funding under the same application.

(4) “Participating supervisory union leadership team” means the superintendent or designee of each participating supervisory union and two representatives of schools within each participating supervisory union appointed by its superintendent.

(5) “Program” means the Literacy Grant Program created by this section.

(b) Program creation and grant authorization.

(1) The Literacy Grant Program is created to enable supervisory unions to adopt best practices in teaching literacy instruction to students in prekindergarten through grade 3.

(A) In recognition that literacy proficiency is a foundational learning skill, this Program is designed to assist supervisory unions implement 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173 by providing students with the literacy skills necessary to ensure that core instruction meets most needs of most students and that students who struggle receive all instruction from highly skilled teachers.

(B) Supervisory unions are encouraged to work together in a sustained and targeted manner to improve literacy outcomes by applying together for the grant funding or otherwise working collaboratively in a manner that uses resources in an effective and efficient manner.

(C) Subject to the terms of the Program, grants shall be awarded to eligible applicants for three consecutive years.

(2)(A) The Agency of Education shall inform supervisory unions of the availability of grants under this act and provide technical assistance to eligible applicants in applying for these funds.

(B) The Agency, in providing information and technical assistance, shall focus on eligible applicants that have a relative higher percentage of:

(i) students who have over recent years scored lower on literacy assessments;

(ii) students who come from families eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch; or

(iii) 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 People of Color; students who are English language learners; and students on individualized education programs.

(C) The Agency of Education shall also advise supervisory unions of other sources of funding that may be available to advance the purpose of this act.

(c) Application for, and approval of, grant funding.

(1) On or before July 15, 2021, the Agency of Education shall develop the application for the grant program and post the application on the Agency's website.

(2) The application for the grant shall include:

(A) the members of the participating supervisory union leadership team and a description of its governance structure;

(B) the person or persons who will disperse the grant funds among the participating supervisory unions, a description of the fiscal controls to ensure proper accounting of these funds, and the eligible applicant's Program budget;

(C) the literacy indicators and outcomes the eligible applicant seeks to improve, which shall include each of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading

fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and may include any other areas of current best practices in teaching literacy;

(D) the priority problems of practice in teaching and improving literacy outcomes, including shared problems of practice across the participating supervisory unions;

(E) the eligible applicant's plan for improving literacy teaching and outcomes, including how the proposed plan will strengthen the applicant's process towards ensuring that:

(i) core literacy instruction meets most needs of most students;  
and

(ii) students who struggle with literacy proficiency receive all instruction from highly skilled teachers;

(F) how the eligible applicant will implement its plan for literacy teaching and outcomes and a description of how it will achieve the purpose of this act;

(G) how literacy results and outcomes will be measured and reported;

(H) how the eligible applicant will improve its Tier 1 education under 16 V.S.A. § 2902 through this process; and

(I) how systems and processes developed through the grant funding will be sustained.

(3) The Agency shall develop application scoring criteria that incorporate the factors under subdivision (b)(2)(B) of this section and are consistent with subdivisions (2)(A)–(I) of this subsection (c). On or before July 31, 2021, the Agency shall send a copy of the grant application and scoring criteria, review process, and selection criteria to the House and Senate Committees on Education.

(4) Eligible applicants shall submit applications for grant funding to the Agency of Education, which shall review those applications. Following the application review process, the Agency shall recommend applications to the Secretary for funding based on the review scores, funding dollars available, and the Agency's view of the applicant's need for literacy instructional support as compared with other applicants. The Secretary shall make the final grant funding determination.

(5) Based on the Secretary's determination, the Agency of Education shall, on or before September 1, 2021, award the first year of grant funding, up to \$100,000.00 per application, to successful applicants. The amount of this

funding shall be based on the applicant's proposed budget, total availability of funds, and the applicant's need for literacy instructional support as compared with other applicants. If the amount appropriated for this purpose is insufficient to fully fund the grants under that section, then the grant amounts that are awarded shall be prorated.

(6) The Agency of Education shall, on or before each of September 1, 2022 and 2023, award the second year and third year of grant funding, respectively, of up to \$100,000.00 per eligible applicant per year. The amount of this funding shall be based on the applicant's proposed budget, total availability of funds, and the Secretary's assessment of the eligible applicant's progress towards implementing its action plan to improve literacy teaching and outcomes under subdivision (2)(F) of this subsection. The Secretary may deny or reduce second- or third-year grant funding if the Secretary finds that the applicant has made insufficient progress towards implementing its action plan. If the amount appropriated for this purpose is insufficient to fully fund the grants under that section, then the grant amounts that are awarded shall be prorated.

(d) Use of grant funds.

(1) Grant funds shall be used to:

(A) establish the participating supervisory union leadership team and its governance structure;

(B) implement the eligible applicant's action plan to improve literacy teaching and outcomes under subdivision (c)(2)(F) of this section; and

(C) measure the literacy results and outcomes under subdivision (c)(2)(G) of this section.

(2) Grant funds may be used to:

(A) build literacy instructional leadership capacity to lead the improvement of the quality of literacy teaching and for the improvement of student learning;

(B) implement an instructional coaching model, as described in the guidelines for implementing effective coaching systems issued by the Agency of Education in March 2016 (Coaching Guidelines);

(C) implement a systems' coaching model, as described in the Coaching Guidelines;

(D) support educators in using collaborative data systems to promote continuous improvement of literacy teaching and outcomes;

(E) provide focused training on the literacy indicators and outcomes the eligible applicant seeks to improve, which, if offered, shall include each of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and any other areas of focus in teaching literacy;

(F) employ universal design for literacy learning, which is a framework to improve teaching and learning for all students based on scientific research on how people learn;

(G) employ evidence-based structured literacy instruction, including for students at risk for dyslexia or diagnosed with dyslexia; and

(H) employ any other proven method that builds sustainable systemwide improvement in literacy delivery and outcomes.

(3) Required activities shall not be duplicative of existing programs and activities.

(4) Grant funds may be used for hiring additional staff, providing additional compensation to existing staff, or contracting with another entity or entities to aid in the implementation activities under subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(e) Evaluation and reporting.

(1) Not later than 30 calendar days after the one-year anniversary of receiving a grant award under this section, the eligible applicant shall submit to the Agency of Education a report that describes progress and concerns with the implementation of the eligible applicant's action plan to improve literacy teaching and outcomes under subdivision (c)(2)(F) of this section.

(2) On or before January 15, 2025, the Agency of Education shall report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the impact of the grant program. The report shall be made publicly available on the Agency of Education's website.

#### Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from federal funds to the Agency of Education for fiscal year 2022 for the literacy grants to be funded on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under Sec. 3 of this act.

(b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

(1) not more than \$16,000.00 for informational and technical assistance for eligible applicants as defined under Sec. 3(a)(2) of this act; and

(2) not more than \$16,000.00 for the evaluations required under Sec. 3(e)(1) of this act.

Sec. 5. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; STAFFING

The following position is created in the Agency of Education: one full-time, director level, classified position to serve as the Statewide Literacy Coordinator in the Office of the Secretary. The person hired as the Statewide Literacy Coordinator shall hold a masters' level degree, or have equivalent expertise based on work experience, in the field of evidenced-based literacy instruction. There is appropriated to the Agency of Education from the General Fund for fiscal year 2022 the amount of \$150,000.00 for salary, benefits, and operating expenses for this position.

Sec. 6. 16 V.S.A. § 2903a is added to read:

§ 2903a. ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

(a) Creation. There is created the Advisory Council on Literacy. The Council shall advise the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly on how to improve proficiency outcomes in literacy for students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and how to sustain those outcomes.

(b) Membership. The Council shall be composed of the following 14 members:

(1) eight members who shall serve as ex officio members:

(A) the Statewide Literacy Coordinator at the Agency of Education;

(B) a member appointed of the Standards Board for Professional Educators who is knowledgeable in licensing requirements for teaching literacy, appointed by the Standards Board;

(C) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association or designee;

(D) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association or designee;

(E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators or designee;

(F) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or designee;

(G) the Executive Director of the Vermont Independent Schools Association or designee; and

(H) the Executive Director of the Vermont-National Education Association or designee;

(2) six members who shall serve two-year terms:

(A) a representative appointed by the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association;

(B) three teachers appointed by the Vermont-National Education Association who teach literacy, one of whom shall be a special education literacy teacher and two of whom shall teach literacy to students in prekindergarten through grade three; and

(C) two community members who have struggled with literacy proficiency or supported others who have struggled with literacy proficiency, appointed by the Agency of Education in consultation with the Vermont Family Network.

(c) Members with two-year terms.

(1) A member with a term limit shall serve a term of two years and until a successor is appointed. A term shall begin on January 1 of the year of appointment and run through December 31 of the last year of the term. Terms of these members shall be staggered so that not all terms expire at the same time.

(2) A vacancy created before the expiration of a term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment for the unexpired portion of the term.

(3) A member with a term limit shall not serve more than two consecutive terms. A member appointed to fill a vacancy created before the expiration of a term shall not be deemed to have served a term for the purpose of this subdivision.

(d) Powers and duties. The Council shall advise the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly on how to improve proficiency outcomes in literacy for students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and how to sustain those outcomes and shall:

(1) advise the State Board of Education on how to update section 2903 of this title and the statewide literacy plan required by that section and how to maintain that plan;

(2) advise the Agency of Education on what services the Agency should provide to school districts to support implementation of the plan and on staffing levels and resources needed at the Agency to support the Statewide Literacy Coordinator;

(3) develop a plan for collecting literacy-related data that informs:

(A) literacy instructional practices;

(B) teacher professional development in the field of literacy;

(C) what proficiencies and other skills should be measured through literacy assessments and how those literacy assessments are incorporated into local assessment plans; and

(D) how to identify school progress in achieving literacy outcomes, including closing literacy gaps for students from historically underserved populations;

(4) recommend best practices for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy instruction within the multitiered system of supports required under section 2902 of this title to best improve and sustain literacy proficiency; and

(5) review literacy assessments and outcomes and provide ongoing advice as to how to continuously improve those outcomes and sustain that improvement.

(e) Report. Notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), annually on or before December 15, the Council shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education with its findings, any recommendations for legislative action, and progress toward outcomes identified in this section. The report shall contain an executive summary, which shall not exceed two pages.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Council to occur on or before August 1, 2021.

(2) The Statewide Literacy Coordinator at the Agency of Education shall chair the Council, provided that until that position is filled, the Council shall select a chair from among its members.

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

(4) The Council shall meet not more than eight times per year.

(g) Assistance. The Council shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Council shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than eight meetings of the Council per year.

Sec. 7. APPROPRIATION; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

The sum of \$6,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year 2022 to the Agency of Education for per diem and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Advisory Council on Literacy created under Sec. 6 of this act.

Sec. 8. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; ANNUAL BUDGET REQUEST

The Agency of Education shall, in its annual budget request to the General Assembly, include the amount of \$6,000.00 for per diem and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Advisory Council on Literacy created under Sec. 6 of this act.

Sec. 9. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON  
LITERACY

(a) The Advisory Council on Literacy, created in Sec. 6 of this act, is established on August 1, 2021.

(b) Members of the Council shall be appointed on or before August 1, 2021 and, for members with a term limit, their service on the Council from the date of appointment through December 31, 2021 shall not be counted toward their term limit.

(c)(1) In order to stagger the terms of the members of the Council, the initial terms of the following members shall be for one year:

(A) two of the teachers appointed under subdivision (b)(2)(B) of this section; and

(B) the two community members appointed under subdivision (b)(2)(C) of this section.

(2) After the expiration of the initial term set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection, Council member terms shall be as set forth in 16 V.S.A. § 2903a(c) in Sec. 6 of this act.

Sec. 10. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; LITERACY PLAN

Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 2903(b), on or before December 1, 2021, the Agency of Education shall, in collaboration with the Advisory Council on Literacy created by Sec. 6 of this act, update the statewide literacy plan required under 16 V.S.A. § 2903(b).

Sec. 11. TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS; REVIEW

(a) On or before December 1, 2021, the Agency of Education in collaboration with the Standards Board for Professional Educators shall review:

(1) teacher preparation programs to assess to what extent these programs prepare teacher candidates to use “evidence-based literacy instruction”; and

(2) licensing and re-licensing criteria as it pertains to literacy instruction.

(b) “Evidence-based literacy instruction” means reading, writing, and spelling instruction that is supported by high-quality research that meets rigorous standards and is proven to translate effectively to classroom practices.

#### Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

**Rep. Scheu of Middlebury**, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee on Education and when further amended as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 4, appropriation of funds, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

#### Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

(a) The sum of \$3,090,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(1), Pub. L. No. 117-2 to the Agency of Education for fiscal year 2022 for the literacy grants to be funded on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under Sec. 3 of this act.

(b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

(1) not more than one percent of the funds appropriated under subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for informational and technical assistance for eligible applicants as defined under Sec. 3(a)(2) of this act; and

(2) not more than two percent of the funds appropriated under subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for the evaluations required under Sec. 3(e)(1) of this act.

Second: By striking out Sec. 5, Agency of Education; staffing, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

#### Sec. 5. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; STAFFING

(a) The following position is created in the Agency of Education: one full-time, director level, classified position to serve as the Statewide Literacy Coordinator in the Office of the Secretary. The person hired as the Statewide Literacy Coordinator shall hold a masters’ level degree, or have equivalent

expertise based on work experience, in the field of evidenced-based literacy instruction.

(b) There is appropriated to the Agency of Education from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(4), Pub. L. No. 117-2 for fiscal year 2022 the amount of \$450,000.00 for salary, benefits, and operating expenses for fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for this position.

Third: By striking out Sec. 7, Appropriation, Advisory Council on Literacy, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 7. APPROPRIATION; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

The sum of \$18,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(4), Pub. L. No. 117-2 in fiscal year 2022 to the Agency of Education for per diem and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Advisory Council on Literacy for fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024 created under Sec. 6 of this act.

Fourth: By striking out Sec. 8 in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 8. REPEAL; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

16 V.S.A. § 2903a (Advisory Council on Literacy) as added by this act is repealed on June 30, 2024.

The bill, having appeared on the Calendar one day for Notice, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Education was amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations.

Pending the question, Shall the bill be read a third time? **Reps. Webb of Shelburne, Arrison of Weathersfield, Austin of Colchester, Brady of Williston, Brown of Richmond, Conlon of Cornwall, Cupoli of Rutland City, Hooper of Randolph, James of Manchester, Toof of St. Albans Town, and Williams of Granby** moved to amend the report of the Committee on Education as amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 6, 16 V.S.A. § 2903a, Advisory Council on Literacy, by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (b) to read as follows:

(b) Membership. The Council shall be composed of the following 15 members:

(1) eight members who shall serve as ex officio members:

(A) the Statewide Literacy Coordinator at the Agency of Education;

(B) a member of the Standards Board for Professional Educators who is knowledgeable in licensing requirements for teaching literacy, appointed by the Standards Board;

(C) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association or designee;

(D) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association or designee;

(E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators or designee;

(F) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or designee;

(G) the Executive Director of the Vermont Independent Schools Association or designee; and

(H) the Executive Director of the Vermont-National Education Association or designee; and

(2) seven members who shall serve two-year terms:

(A) a representative appointed by the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association;

(B) three teachers appointed by the Vermont-National Education Association who teach literacy, one of whom shall be a special education literacy teacher and two of whom shall teach literacy to students in prekindergarten through grade three;

(C) two community members who have struggled with literacy proficiency or supported others who have struggled with literacy proficiency, appointed by the Agency of Education in consultation with the Vermont Family Network; and

(D) one member appointed by the Agency of Education who has expertise in working with students with dyslexia.

Second: By striking out Sec. 7, appropriation; Advisory Council on Literacy, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 7. APPROPRIATION; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

The sum of \$21,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(4), Pub. L. No. 117-2 in fiscal year 2022 to the Agency of Education for per diem and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Advisory Council on Literacy for fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024 created under Sec. 6 of this act.

Which was agreed to. Thereupon, the bill was amended as recommended by the Committee on Education as amended, and third reading ordered.

**Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**

**H. 106**

**Rep. James of Manchester** for the Committee on Education, to which had been referred House bill entitled,

An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through community schools

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

This act shall be called the “Community Schools Act.”

Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

(a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to achieve their dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every child deserves a public school that fully delivers on that promise.

(2) According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than half of the nation’s schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, a percentage that has risen steadily in recent decades. According to the Vermont Agency of Education, an average of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions during the 2019–2020 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. As a result, some schoolchildren face more challenges than others in succeeding in school and in life.

(3) Community schools facilitate the coordination of comprehensive programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of students and families, such as substance misuse, lack of stable housing, inadequate medical and dental care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence, so students can do their best.

(4) According to research reports from the Learning Policy Institute, the four key pillars of the community schools approach, which are integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices, promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools as well as address out-of-school barriers to learning.

(5) This research also shows that community school interventions can result in improvements in a variety of student outcomes, including attendance, academic achievement (including reducing racial and economic achievement gaps), and high school graduation rates, and can meet the Every Student Succeeds Act standard of “evidence-based” approaches to support schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and intervention.

(6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school (Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study; APEX and Community School Partnership; 2019). Every dollar invested in programs and support (including medical, dental, and social services; afterschool and summer enrichment; parent engagement; and early childhood services) can yield up to \$15.00 in return (Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence; Anna Maier, Julia Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and Livia Lam; 2017).

(7) According to the Learning Policy Institute, “establishing community schools” is one of 10 recommended strategies for restarting and rethinking the role of public education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed, well-coordinated supports and services that help students and families with increasingly complex needs.

(8) Community schools have been established in many states and settings, from New York City to Chicago and Los Angeles. But the approach has also been successful in rural communities. In McDowell County, West Virginia (population 22,000), community schools are part of a public-private partnership, a collaboration between state government, nonprofit agencies, businesses, and philanthropic foundations, that aims to “make educational improvement the route to a brighter economic future.” The national nonprofit Rural School and Community Trust is an active advocate for expanding this model in rural areas, calling the relationship between good schools and thriving communities “crucial.” In Vermont, a growing number of schools are implementing or exploring the model, from Molly Stark Elementary in Bennington, which offers school-based health services, extended hours, summer school, and family learning activities, to the school-based health center in Winooski.

(b) Purpose. This law is enacted to support a demonstration grant program for the implementation of community school programs that provide students with equitable access to a high-quality education.

### Sec. 3. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS; DEMONSTRATION GRANT

## PROGRAM

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Community school coordinator” means a person who:

(A) is a full-time or part-time staff member serving in an eligible school or in a school district or supervisory union with an eligible school and appointed in accordance with Vermont law; and

(B) is responsible for the identification, implementation, and coordination of a community school program, subject to the operational and reporting structure of the community school coordinator’s employer.

(2) “Community school program” means a program offered at a public elementary or secondary school that includes all four of the following:

(A) integrated student supports, which address out-of-school barriers to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and providers, coordinated by a community school coordinator, which may include access to services such as medical, dental, vision care, and mental health services, or access to counselors to assist with housing, transportation, nutrition, immigration, or criminal justice issues;

(B) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, which may include before-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programs, that provide additional academic instruction, individualized academic support, enrichment activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize real-world learning and community problem-solving and that may include art, music, drama, creative writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science, tutoring and homework help, and recreational programs that enhance and are consistent with the school’s curriculum;

(C) active family and community engagement, which brings students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s education and makes the school a community hub, providing adults with a facility to access educational opportunities they want, which may include coordinating services with outside providers to offer English as a second language classes, green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, financial literacy, career counseling, job skills training, services for substance misuse, and other programs that bring community members into the building for meetings or events; and

(D) collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies that shall, at a minimum, leverage the multitiered system of supports and include a community school coordinator and a representative of families in

the community, and may include school, school district, and other leadership or governance teams; teacher learning communities; and other staff to manage the multiple, complex, joint work of school and community organizations.

(3) “Demonstration grant” means a grant provided to an eligible applicant under this section.

(4) “Eligible applicant” means either a school district with an eligible school or supervisory union with an eligible school.

(5) “Eligible school” means a public elementary or secondary school that:

(A) has a student body where at least 40 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.; or

(B) has been identified for comprehensive or equity support and intervention under Section 1111(c)(4)(D) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 or otherwise identified by the State as in need of additional support.

(b) Demonstration grant authorization. The Secretary of Education is authorized to provide annual demonstration grants of up to \$110,000.00 a year for a period of three years for each eligible applicant to:

(1) hire a community school coordinator to develop and implement a community school program; or

(2) designate a community school coordinator from existing personnel and augment work already being performed to develop and implement a community school program.

(c) Grant administration.

(1) The Secretary of Education shall administer the demonstration grant program under this section. The Secretary shall develop the demonstration grant application, determine grant amounts, and provide grant funding on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 to successful applicants. The Secretary may deny or reduce second- and third-year grant funding if the Secretary finds that the applicant has made insufficient progress towards developing and implementing a community school program.

(2) The Agency of Education shall inform supervisory unions of the availability of demonstration grants under this act and provide technical assistance to eligible applicants in applying for these funds. The Agency of Education shall also advise eligible applicants of other sources of funding that may be available to advance the purpose of this act.

(d) Use of grant funding.

(1) An eligible applicant shall use the demonstration grant funding to hire a community school coordinator to develop and implement a community school program or to designate a community school coordinator from existing personnel and augment work already being performed to develop and implement a community school program.

(2) If the funding is used to hire a community school coordinator, then during the first year of demonstration grant funding, the community school coordinator shall conduct a needs and assets assessment of the school to determine what is necessary to develop a community school program and an action plan to implement the community school program. During the second and third years of demonstration grant funding, the community school coordinator shall oversee the implementation of the community school program.

(e) Evaluation.

(1) At the end of each year of grant funding, each eligible applicant that received grant funding shall undergo an evaluation designed by the Agency of Education.

(2) On or before each of December 15, 2022 and 2024, the Agency of Education shall report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the impact of the demonstration grant program. The report shall be made publicly available on the Agency of Education's website.

Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

(a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$1,529,000.00 of the amount allocated to the Agency of Education from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund pursuant to Section 313 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260 for the demonstration grants to be funded on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under Sec. 3 of this act.

(b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

(1) not more than one percent of funds for informational assistance and technical assistance, such as assistance with applying for grant funding and use of grant funding, for eligible applicants under Sec. 3 of this act; and

(2) not more than two percent of funds for the evaluations required under Sec. 3 of this act.

Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

**Rep. Scheu of Middlebury**, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee on Education and when further amended as follows:

By striking out Sec. 4, appropriation of funds, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 4 to read as follows:

Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

(a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$3,399,000.00 of the amount allocated to the Agency of Education from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(1), 2021, Pub. L. No. 117-2 for the demonstration grants to be funded on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under Sec. 3 of this act.

(b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

(1) not more than one percent of the funds appropriated under subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for informational and technical assistance, such as assistance with applying for grant funding and use of grant funding, for eligible applicants as defined under Sec. 3 of this act; and

(2) not more than two percent of the funds appropriated under subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for the evaluations required under Sec. 3 of this act.

The bill, having appeared on the Calendar one day for Notice, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Education was amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations and the report of the Committee on Education as amended was agreed to, and third reading ordered.

**Committee Bill; Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**

**H. 426**

**Rep. Arrison of Weathersfield** spoke for the Committee on Education.

House bill, entitled

An act relating to addressing the needs and conditions of public school facilities in the State

**Rep. Scheu of Middlebury** for the Committee on Appropriations recommended that the bill ought to pass when amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 3, School facilities conditions assessment; Agency of Education; Department of Buildings and General Services, by striking out subsection (d) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

(d) The total cost for the assessment described in this section shall not exceed \$2,500,000.00, of which the Secretary is authorized to expend as follows:

(1) Of the initial expenditures, not more than the \$627,500.00 shall be used from the amount allocated to the Agency of Education from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act pursuant to Secs. 18003(e), 2020, Pub. L. No. 116-136.

(2) Of the remaining expenditures, not more than \$1,872,500.00 shall be used from the amount allocated to the Agency of Education Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund pursuant to Section 313(e) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260.

Second: In Sec. 7, Agency of Education; creation of positions, in subsection (a) by striking out “Two full-time exempt positions are” and inserting in lieu thereof “One limited-service position funded through January 15, 2023 is” and by striking out “existing positions” and inserting in lieu thereof “an existing position”, and by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

(b) In fiscal year 2022, the Agency of Education is authorized to use not more than \$127,500.00 from the amount allocated to the Agency of Education Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund pursuant to Section 313(e) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260. for the position described in subsection (a) of this section.

Having appeared on the Calendar one day for Notice, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Appropriations agreed to, and third reading ordered.

### **Committee Bill; Second Reading; Third Reading Ordered**

#### **H. 434**

**Rep. Norris of Shoreham** spoke for the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

House bill, entitled

An act relating to establishing the Agricultural Innovation Board

**Rep. Toleno of Brattleboro**, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended the bill ought to pass.

Having appeared on the Calendar one day for Notice, was taken up, read the second time, and third reading ordered.

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**Message from the Senate No. 29**

A message was received from the Senate by Mr. Marshall, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has on its part passed Senate bill of the following title:

**S. 107.** An act relating to confidential information concerning the initial arrest and charge of a juvenile.

In the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Governor has informed the Senate that on the seventeenth day of March, 2021, he approved and signed a bill originating in the Senate of the following title:

**S. 110.** An act relating to extending eligibility for Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation.

**Remarks Journalized**

On motion of **Rep. Sibilia of Dover**, the following remarks by **Rep. Pugh of South Burlington** were ordered printed in the Journal:

“Madam Speaker:

I’m wondering if the House knows what the junior member from Winooski has in common with Amanda Gorman and Dolly Parton? If you don’t, let me tell you. They join Representative Taylor Small as being identified by Time Out Magazine as being one of 11 amazing women who have changed the world; who have not only survived a global pandemic, but have channeled all their efforts into making their communities and the world a better place. Congratulations, junior member from Winooski.”

**Adjournment**

At four o'clock and fifty-one minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at nine o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon.