

Senate proposal of amendment

J.R.H. 2

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

The Senate proposes to the House to amend the joint resolution by striking out all the Whereas and Resolved clauses and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Whereas, starting in the early 1900s, laws and associated policies were adopted to promote the eugenics movement, and the title of the book *Breeding Better Vermonters* by Nancy L. Gallagher accurately describes the movement's purported intent, and

Whereas, this movement targeted for elimination those it deemed currently or potentially delinquent, defective, and dependent persons through sterilizations, primarily of women, to prevent individuals from having children, and

Whereas, in 1912, the Vermont General Assembly passed S.79, "An act to authorize and provide for the sterilization of imbeciles, feeble-minded, and insane persons, rapists, confirmed criminals and other defectives," however, Governor Allen M. Fletcher vetoed the bill, citing constitutional concerns that Attorney General Rufus E. Brown had raised, and

Whereas, nevertheless, State agencies and institutions adopted policies and procedures to carry out the intent of the vetoed legislation and the beliefs of the eugenics movement, and

Whereas, in 1925, University of Vermont zoology professor Henry F. Perkins, who established the Eugenics Survey of Vermont and served as President of the American Eugenics Society, collaborated with leaders of Vermont State government to collect evidence of Vermonters' alleged delinquency, dependency, and deficiency, and

Whereas, these State-sanctioned policies targeted the poor and persons with mental and physical disabilities, and

Whereas, these same policies also targeted individuals, families, and communities whose heritage was documented as French Canadian, French-Indian, or of other mixed ethnic or racial composition and persons whose extended families' successor generations now identify as Abenaki or as members of other indigenous bands or tribes, and

Whereas, in 1927, S.59, "An act relating to Voluntary Eugenic Sterilization" passed the Senate but was defeated in the House, and

Whereas, the General Assembly adopted 1931 Acts and Resolves No. 174 (Act 174), “An Act for Human Betterment by Voluntary Sterilization,” for the purpose of eliminating from the future Vermont genetic pool persons deemed mentally unfit to procreate, and

Whereas, this State-sanctioned eugenics policy was not an isolated example of oppression but reflected the historic marginalization, discriminatory treatment, and displacement of these targeted groups in Vermont, and

Whereas, eugenics advocates promoted sterilization for the protection of Vermont’s “old stock” and to preserve the physical and social environment of Vermont for their children, and

Whereas, the Eugenics Survey received assistance from State and municipal officials, individuals, and private organizations, and the resulting sterilization, institutionalization, and separation policies intruded on the lives of its victims and had devastating and irreversible impacts that still persist in the lives of the targeted groups and especially the descendants of those who were directly impacted, and

Whereas, in conducting the Eugenics Survey, the surveyors were granted access to case files from State agencies and institutions, and the files were made available to persons of authority, including police departments, social workers, educators, and town officials, and

Whereas, as a result of the opening of these files, children and adults were removed from families, individuals were institutionalized or incarcerated, family connections were severed, and the sense of kinship, continuity and community was lost, and

Whereas, the legacy of the eugenics movement continues to influence some of Vermont’s current policies and legislation, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly sincerely apologizes and expresses sorrow and regret to all individual Vermonters and their families and descendants who were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly continues to work to eradicate the lasting legacy of its prior actions by listening to and working with the affected individuals and communities, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly recognizes that further legislative action should be taken to address the continuing impact of State-sanctioned eugenics polices and related practices of disenfranchisement, ethnocide, and genocide.