

HIGHLIGHTS

H. 315 An Act Relating to COVID-19 Relief and Recovery for Vermont HOUSE STRIKE ALL AMENDMENT

This bill spends or reserves one-time funds of \$29,502,500 general funds; \$5,000,000 new Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF); \$59,048,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and \$4,000,000 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSR). In addition, there is \$3,200,000 Reallocated and Reauthorized CRF.

The House COVID-19 Relief Bill advances spending to provide timely, critical assistance to Vermonters and businesses in fiscal year 2021, needed as the result of the public health emergency and to advance projects to stimulate recovery. This includes:

- Provides \$10.5 million for businesses: Funds Economic Recovery Grants of \$10 million ARPA funds for Vermont businesses that experienced an economic loss due to the pandemic and did not meet the eligibility criteria for federal programs. Another \$500,000 is added for microbusiness assistance through the Community Action Agencies.
- Includes 2020 tax forgiveness for UI Benefits: Adds needed tax year 2020 linkage language and ensures that up to 100,000 Vermonters who received unemployment benefits in calendar year 2020 will not have to pay taxes on the first \$10,200 of those benefits when they file in this tax season if their AGI is less than \$150,000. It leaves to the tax committees the need to resolve other tax linkage issues for 2021 in subsequent legislation.
- Provides Housing funds of \$15 million: Appropriates \$10 million general funds to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to provide shelter for persons at risk of experiencing homelessness or suffering economic harm due to the pandemic and \$5 million CRF to provide additional homeowner assistance as a bridge while we are waiting for the new federal homeowner assistance to arrive.
- Provides \$5.54 million for mental health: In the Department of Mental Health; appropriates \$300,000 ARPA funds for Emergency Outreach Service Grants; \$4 million ARPA funds for Housing Supports in community settings; \$850,000 ARPA funds to provide case management staff at the Designated and Specialized Service Agencies; \$150,000 ARPA funds for training and wellness supports for front line health care workers; and \$240,000 ARPA funds for recovery centers to strengthen their capacity to serve.
- Supports for New Americans, refugees, and immigrants: Provides \$700,000 ARPA funds for new Americans, refugees, and immigrants.
- Provides ARPA Funds for Reach Up Recipients: Appropriates \$1.3 million ARPA funds to the Department for Children and Families for families participating in the Reach Up program.
- Provides funds for the Vermont Food Bank: Appropriates \$1,376,000 ARPA funds 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, and \$82,000 for diapers

- Provides funds for the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired: Appropriates \$100,000 ARPA funds to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide technology assistance to address social isolation.
- Provides funding for Data Collection and Analysis: Appropriates \$200,000 general funds for data collection and analysis regarding health equity and health disparities.
- Provides funding for LPN Education and Classes for Recent High School Graduates: Appropriates \$8.2 million ARPA funds to support higher education classes for LPNs and upskilling, and classes for recent high school graduates through efforts involving the Vermont State Colleges, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, and University of Vermont.
- Provides funding for School Indoor Air Quality: Appropriates \$15 million ARPA funds to continue a school indoor air quality grant program with Efficiency Vermont.
- Provides Funding for After School and Summer Meals Programs: Appropriates \$4 million ESSR funding for after school and summer programs through the Agency of Education with involvement of the Department for Children and Families; and \$5.5 million ARPA funds for summer meals.
- Provides Funding for Broadband: Appropriates \$5 million for broadband internet connectivity, \$3.2 million reauthorization of CRF funds in the Department of Public Service from unexpended CRF for the COVID-Response Line Extension Customer Assistance Program established by 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 137, Sec. 13, extends the COVID-Response Temporary Broadband Lifeline Program, and provides \$1.8 million ARPA funds for a broadband infrastructure program and technical assistance to assist Communications Union Districts (CUD).
- Provides Funding for Working Lands, slaughterhouses, and soil health: Appropriates \$3 million ARPA funds to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the Working Lands Program to allow early funding of projects. Coupled with funding in the budget, this will provide \$5 million for working lands with \$500,000 of that dedicated for slaughter and processing facilities. Another \$250,000 general funds is appropriated for soil health.
- Provides funding for VOREC and Investments in Recreational Infrastructure: Appropriates \$10 million to the Agency of Natural Resources of which \$5 million is general funds for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (VOREC) and \$5 million ARPA funding for the Vermont Agency of natural Resources Central Office for investments to improve recreational infrastructure and access on State lands and Vermont's trail network.
- Provides Technical Assistance to Local Governments: Appropriates \$950,000 ARPA funds for technical assistance to local government's that are receiving substantial federal relief.