

Letter of support to Vermont General Assembly

Vermont's unemployment rate has fallen to 3.1% -- there are just under 10,000 workers actively looking for work. And yet the labor force has shrunk by almost 30,000 workers since February 2020. And while many businesses have shut their doors, those that remain are struggling to find workers. A dearth of skilled workers is slowing the construction of housing, weatherization improvements, the gains of renewable energy installations, advanced manufacturing, and the proliferation of energy storage and transmission. The outdoor recreation, working lands, and conservation sectors are in equal need of a skilled and well-trained workforce.

Businesses and conservation organizations need workers. Workers need skills. Vermont should significantly increase its investment in workforce training programs that provide community service and create pathways to employment for young people and side-lined workers.

We support the Vermont Serve Learn & Earn investment strategy that would use a portion of the COVID relief funding to expand and strengthen proven workforce training programs. What makes this investment all the more compelling are the multiple ways that these service programs reduce poverty, build community, and protect the environment.

It is clear to us that any person willing to provide service in the areas of housing, outdoor recreation, working lands, food security, conservation, weatherization and renewable energy should have the opportunity to gain vital job skills that will meet employer needs and result in gainful employment.

Respectfully submitted,

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