

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 106
3 entitled “An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through
4 community schools” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

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

9 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

10 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

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

14 (2) According to the most recent data, more than half of the nation’s
15 schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning they qualify for free or
16 reduced-price lunch, the highest proportion since this statistic began being
17 documented over 60 years ago. According to the Vermont Agency of
18 Education, an average of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions
19 during the 2019–2020 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.
20 As a result, some schoolchildren face more challenges than others in
21 succeeding in school and in life.

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

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

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

18 (6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on
19 investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community
20 coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school,
21 while every dollar invested in programs and support (including medical, dental

1 and social services, afterschool and summer enrichment, parent engagement
2 and early childhood services) can yield up to \$14.80 in return.

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

9 (b) Purpose. This law is enacted to support a pilot program for the
10 implementation of community schools programs that provide students with
11 equitable access to a high-quality education.

12 Sec. 3. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS; PILOT GRANT PROGRAM

13 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

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

15 (A) is a full-time or part-time staff member serving in an eligible
16 school or in a school district or supervisory union with an eligible school; and

17 (B) is responsible for the identification, implementation, and
18 coordination of a community school program.

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

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

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

15 (C) active family and community engagement, which brings
16 students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s
17 education and makes the school a neighborhood hub, providing adults with a
18 facility to access educational opportunities they want, including coordinating
19 services with outside providers to offer English as a second language classes,
20 green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, financial literacy,
21 career counseling, job skills training, services for substance misuse, and other

1 programs that bring community members into the building for meetings or
2 events; and

3 (D) collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of
4 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies
5 that shall, at a minimum, include a school-based leadership team, a community
6 school coordinator, and a community-wide leadership team and may include
7 other leadership or governance teams, teacher learning communities, and other
8 staff to manage the multiple, complex, joint work of school and community
9 organizations.

10 (3) “Eligible applicant” means an eligible school or a school district or
11 supervisory union with an eligible school.

12 (4) “Eligible school” means a public elementary or secondary school
13 that:

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

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

1 (5) “Pilot grant” means a grant provided to an eligible applicant under
2 this section.

3 (b) Pilot grant authorization. The Secretary of Education is authorized to
4 provide annual pilot grants of \$110,000.00 a year for a period of three years for
5 each eligible school to hire a community school coordinator to develop and
6 implement a community school program.

7 (c) Grant administration.

8 (1) The Secretary of Education shall administer the pilot grant program
9 under this section. The Secretary shall develop the pilot grant application and
10 shall provide grant funding on or before September 1 of each of 2022, 2023,
11 and 2024 to successful applicants. If the amount appropriated for this purpose
12 is insufficient to fully fund the pilot grants under this section, then the pilot
13 grant amounts that are awarded shall be prorated. The Secretary may deny or
14 reduce second- and third-year grant funding if the Secretary finds that the
15 applicant has made insufficient progress towards developing and implementing
16 a community school program.

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

1 (d) Use of grant funding. An eligible applicant shall use the pilot grant
2 funding to hire a community school coordinator to develop and implement a
3 community school program. During the first year of pilot grant funding, the
4 community school coordinator shall conduct a needs and assets assessment of
5 the school to determine what is necessary to develop a community school
6 program and an action plan to implement the community school program.
7 During the second and third years of pilot grant funding, the community school
8 coordinator shall oversee the implementation of the community school
9 program.

10 (e) Evaluation.

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

14 (2) On or before December 15, 2023, the Agency of Education shall
15 report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the impact of the pilot
16 grant program. The report shall be made publicly available on the Agency of
17 Education's website.

18 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

19 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, \$1,529,000.00 is
20 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education for fiscal
21 year 2022 designated for the pilot grant program under Sec. 3 of this act.

1 (b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

2 (1) not more than one percent of funds for informational and technical
3 assistance for eligible applicants and eligible schools under Sec. 3 of this act;
4 and

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

7 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on passage.

9

10 (Committee vote: _____)

11

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE