



STATE OF VERMONT
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Date: February 25, 2022
To: House Committee on Appropriations
From: House Committee on Education
Re: FY23 Budget Recommendations

The House Committee on Education (HCE) has reviewed relevant sections of the Governor's proposed state budget and make the following recommendation:

HIGER EDUCATION:

University of Vermont: We support **fully funding the UVM FY23 budget request of \$52.5 million**, which includes the Governor's recommended increase of **\$10 million** in the base appropriation. Currently, just over half of UVM's appropriation goes to financial aid for Vermont students and the remainder is split between the College of Medicine and UVM Extension. This increase supports President Garimella's top strategic goal of access and affordability. We also support the **additional request for \$30 million in ARPA funds** to improve indoor air quality. UVM was asked to hold this request from FY22 and resubmit it for FY23.

Vermont State Colleges (VSCS):

- HCE support granting the Vermont State Colleges request for a total of **\$55.4 million** (base funding + bridge funding) in FY23
- HCE supports the set-aside of the remaining **\$29 million in bridge funding** so that it is available for future use and does not need to be revisited in upcoming budget years. Bridge funding is scheduled to end in FY26.

The VSCS has embarked on a historic transformation initiative that includes consolidating its three residential campuses as Vermont State University: consolidating administrative operations, reinventing academic offerings as the nation's first statewide hybrid university, and strengthening the student experience and the workforce development pipeline. This appropriation will support the ongoing transformation work that began in FY22 and will allow VSC "to fulfill promises to employees and students, maintain and teach our programs while we transform, and keep all of our campuses open." The sustainability of the VSC system is critical to increasing affordable access to postsecondary education in Vermont, especially in our rural communities.

Additionally, VSC presented three new workforce development ideas or options in the form of scholarships totaling \$36 million for nursing education, lowering the cost of tuition to match regional costs or the national average, and critical occupations. We support additional consideration of these proposed new initiatives in the context of other workforce development initiatives moving through other committees and how these ideas may or may not overlap with similar proposals made by VSAC.

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC): HCE supports the FY23 request for \$21 million which aligns with the Governor's recommended budget. We assume that the following new or notable items are included within that \$21 million budget request:

- \$1.5 million to expand and continue the new 802Opportunity scholarship: Any Vermonter with a family adjusted gross income of \$75K/year qualifies for up to two years of free tuition at CCV. This increased funding will raise the eligibility cut-off from \$50K AGI.
- \$1 million for the Advancement Grant
- \$3 Million for expanded Nursing Workforce Incentive Loans
- \$3.5 million to support the trades: CDL licensing, plumbing, welding, building, etc.
- \$82,450 for level funding of Dual Enrollment/Early College

PRE-K-12

POSITIONS:

GENERAL FUNDS: We support the AOE budget as presented that includes:

- (1) **School Facility Coordinator:** HCE supports the AOE request for an individual with expertise on school construction and facilities investments. This position is critical for the implementation of Act 72. This position will also help coordinate school safety issues and threat assessments.
- (2) **Communication Coordinator:** HCE supports the request for a position for the policy and communications team. This position would assist the current legislative policy liaison as well as assist with significant inter-agency coordination. It is also hoped that this will help the AOE meet reporting requirements, which frequently are late or incomplete.

FEDERAL FUNDS: We also support authorizing four permanent positions funded through federal funds (through the administrative set aside for federal grants):

- (1) **Grants Manager:** This position will help to coordinate state and federal grants. Additional capacity is needed within the Agency to manage the current high level of grant dollars. This position is funded with indirect funds from federal grants.
- (2) **Special Ed. Program Monitoring Coordinator [2 positions]:** these positions monitor how students who qualify for special education services are being served. Each LEA has an annual performance report around special education services and the Agency is moving into a more robust monitoring and oversight role.
- (3) **Special Ed. Program Monitoring Coordinator for independent schools:** The Agency has never had a permanent designated position to do the work described above with VT independent schools. This is critical to implementation of Act 173 as the Agency anticipates an increased number of students eligible for special education attending independent schools.

Shared School District Data Management System (SSDDMS): We recommend adding the following language related to the struggling e-finance system at the AOE. Background:

- Sec. E.500.1 in Act 11 of the 2018 Special Session required school districts and tech centers to use the same school financial data management system. The AOE selected a program from Power School (E-finance) which has met with considerable challenge.
- Sec 14-18 of Act 66 of 2021 placed a pause on further implementation and required a report back on progress. This report indicated ongoing significant challenges.

Language:<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/House%20Education/Bills/22-0275/Drafts,%20Amendments,%20and%20Legal%20Documents/W~James%20DesMarais~DR%202022--,%20Draft%201.2,%202-22-2022~2-24-2022.pdf>

Child Nutrition Grants: We support **fully funding the Governor's recommended \$500,000 for Child Nutrition Grants** to school districts to purchase local foods. (Act 67 Community Schools)

Child Nutrition Specialist: The AOE has asked us to clarify language for the Child Nutrition Specialist created as part of the local foods initiative in Act 67. (see attached letter). We are unclear if this language is needed. It is currently funded with one-time money. To be clear, HCE intended this to be a permanent position and fully support its inclusion in the budget.

Act 1 (Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group): Due to pandemic disruptions among the group and at AOE, as well as the breadth of their task, the timeline for the Working Group needs to be extended until June 30, 2023, including per diem funding for meetings past the original June 30, 2022 deadline. The money that was appropriated to them last year to hire a consultant (\$50,000) is currently in the RFP process through the Agency and needs to be rolled over to FY23. Draft language is attached to this letter.

Teacher Licensing Fee Exemption Proposal: The AOE proposal to exempt teacher licensing fees for teachers under 25 (\$75,000) or including 25-year-old teachers (\$145,000), was met with mixed review. Some supported no exemption, some supported the \$75,000 option and some supported the full \$145,000. In the end, the committee settled on the \$75,000 option.

New England Higher Education Compact: We support **fully funding** this initiative at the Governor's recommended level-funded amount of **\$84,000**.

The Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV): We support **fully funding GIV's request of \$385,308**. GIV was founded as a partnership with the state and more than 10,000 young Vermonters from every region of the state have participated since 1983. This budget request will allow GIV to ensure financial accessibility for all deserving Vermonters. Specifically, this increase could support 96 low-income students with full scholarships, or 192 students with partial scholarships. GIV has been approximately level funded for 15 years and this appropriation would help to close opportunity gaps for Vermont students.

Adult Education and Literacy Network (AEL): Adult Education and Literacy Network (AEL): **We support fully funding AEL's request for an additional \$1.4 million** for the four AEL providers to assist with operational expenses.

Education Commission of the States: We support funding ECS's request for Vermont to begin paying membership dues in the amount of **\$53,100**. ECS is a non-partisan body working with policy makers around the country. <https://www.ecs.org/who-we-are-2/> Of late, ECS has supported the Legislature in the development of Act 67, the Community Schools bill and provided support in understanding how other states fund career and technical education centers. ECS also recently provided assistance to the AOE and the Pupil Weighting Study Task Force. It is unclear when and why Vermont stopped paying dues.