

1 H.703

2 Representative Marcotte of Coventry moves that the bill be amended as
3 follows:

4 First: By striking out Sec. 5 in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new
5 Sec. 5 to read:

6 Sec. 5. REGIONAL WORKFORCE EXPANSION SYSTEM

7 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

8 (1) Vermont is experiencing an acute labor shortage in 2022 with over
9 25,000 posted job openings and just 8,000 individuals collecting
10 unemployment. The Vermont Department of Labor estimates that the
11 workforce has shrunk by 24,000 individuals from 2019 to 2022, yet the
12 unemployment rate is just 2.9 percent as of February 2022. The workforce
13 participation rate has fallen from 66 percent to 60.6 percent.

14 (2) The Department receives 70 percent of its funding from federal
15 sources, which constrains the Department and its employees from adjusting its
16 work to meet immediate needs.

17 (3) The federal funding for field staff in the Workforce Development
18 Division has declined significantly over the past 20 years, supporting 75
19 persons in 2022 as compared to 135 in 2003. The State has not appropriated
20 funding to support those staff positions.

1 (4) Though Vermont has a small population, the unique characteristics
2 of its region’s employers, educational institutions, demographics, and
3 socioeconomic conditions make it best to address efforts to connect individuals
4 with training and job placement on a regional basis.

5 (b) Regional Workforce Expansion System. The amount of \$3,000,000.00
6 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor for a two-
7 year pilot program to launch and lead a coordinated regional system to work
8 toward accomplishing the following statewide goals:

9 (1) increase statewide labor participation rate;

10 (2) decrease the number of open positions reported by employers;

11 (3) increase the wages of workers as they transition to new jobs; and

12 (4) increase job preparedness.

13 (c) Duties. In order to meet the goals specified in subsection (b) of this
14 section, the Department shall:

15 (1) create new capacity to address and support State activities related to
16 workforce development, expansion, and alignment;

17 (2) focus on the overarching goal of helping workers find jobs and
18 employers find workers;

19 (3) support employers in tailoring their work requirements, conditions,
20 and expectations to better access local workers;

1 (4) collaborate with local education and training providers and regional
2 workforce partners, to create and regularly distribute data related to local labor
3 force supply and demand; and

4 (5) create and share work-based learning and training opportunities with
5 secondary and postsecondary students, local workforce expansion partners, and
6 others interested in starting or advancing in their career.

7 (d) System infrastructure.

8 (1) The Department shall make investments that improve and expand
9 regional capacity to connect supply (workers) and demand (employment) in
10 real-time and shall hire eight full-time limited-service employees with funding
11 allocated to perform the work described in this section who shall report to the
12 Workforce Development Division.

13 (2) Of the eight positions authorized in this subsection, six shall be
14 Workforce Expansion Specialists who shall report to the Workforce
15 Development Division and who shall be placed in the Barre, Bennington,
16 Brattleboro, Rutland, St. Albans and St. Johnsbury areas.

17 (e) Coordination.

18 (1) The Department shall co-convene regular, regional meetings of
19 education, training, business, and service provider partners; coordinate local
20 workforce information collection and distribution, assist with pilot projects,
21 provide targeted sector support, and develop localized career resources such as

1 information for career counseling, local job fairs, career expos, available to a
2 wide range of stakeholders.

3 (2) Regional workforce specialists shall include community partners
4 who directly serve mature workers, youth, individuals with disabilities,
5 individuals who have been involved with the correction system, BIPOC
6 Vermonters, New Americans, and other historically-marginalized populations
7 in efforts to align service delivery, share information, and achieve greater
8 employment outcomes for Vermonters.

9 (3) The Department shall develop labor market information reports by
10 CTE district to support discussion and decision making that will address local
11 labor market challenges and opportunities and support a regional approach to
12 solving local or unique labor supply challenges.

13 (f) Interim report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Department shall
14 provide a narrative update on the progress made in hiring staff, establishing
15 interagency agreements, developing regional information exchange systems,
16 and serving jobseekers and employers to the House and Senate Committees of
17 jurisdiction. The report shall also recommend ongoing metrics that can be
18 easily recorded and reported at the local and State levels.

19 (g) Implementation. The Department of Labor shall begin implementing
20 the Regional Workforce Expansion System on or before August 1, 2022.

1 Second: By striking out Secs. 8-8a in their entirety and inserting in lieu
2 thereof new Secs. 8-8a to read:

3 Sec. 8. 10 V.S.A. § 547 is added to read:

4 **§ 547. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM**

5 (a) Vermont Work-Based Learning and Training Program. The
6 Department of Labor shall develop the statewide Work-Based Learning and
7 Training Program that serves transitioning secondary and postsecondary
8 students and Vermonters seeking work-based experience as part of a career
9 experience or change and is designed to:

10 (1) support Vermonters who are graduating from postsecondary
11 education or a secondary CTE program or who are pursuing a career change
12 with a paid on-the-job work experience lasting 12 weeks or less;

13 (2) establish a statewide platform available to all employers to list their
14 internships, returnships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship
15 opportunities and for jobseekers to view and access information about specific
16 opportunities; and

17 (3) support employers by providing them with assistance in developing
18 and implementing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities.

19 (b) Definitions. As used in this section:

1 (1) “Internship” means a work-based learning experience with an
2 employer where the participant may, but does not necessarily, receive
3 academic credit.

4 (2) “Returnship” means an on-the-job learning experience for an
5 individual who is returning to the workforce after an extended absence or is
6 seeking a limited-duration on-the-job work experience in a different
7 occupation or occupational setting as part of a career change.

8 (c) Activities. The Department may use funds appropriated to it for the
9 Program to:

10 (1) build and administer the Program;

11 (2) develop an online platform that will connect students and jobseekers
12 with work-based learning and training opportunities within Vermont;

13 (3) support work-based learning and training opportunities with public
14 and private employers available to prospective workers located in or relocating
15 to Vermont;

16 (4) promote work-based learning and training as a valuable component
17 of a talent pipeline; and

18 (5) assist employers in developing meaningful work-based learning and
19 training opportunities.

20 (d) Data. The Department shall collect the following data:

21 (1) total number of participants served;

1 (2) number of participants who received wage assistance or other
2 financial assistance as part of this Program and their employment status one
3 year after completion;

4 (3) average wage of participants in subdivision (2) of this subsection at
5 the start of the Program and the average wage of participants one year after
6 completion;

7 (4) number of work-based learning or training opportunities listed on the
8 platform; and

9 (5) number of employers who offered a work-based learning or training
10 opportunity.

11 (e) State participation. The Department shall engage appropriate State
12 agencies and departments to expand Program opportunities with State
13 government and with entities awarded State contracts.

14 (f) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report
15 Program data to the relevant committees of jurisdiction.

16 Sec. 8a. INTERNSHIP COST OFFSET INITIATIVE

17 (a) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$3,000,000 is appropriated from the
18 General Fund to the Department of Labor for an Internship Cost Offset
19 Initiative.

1 (b) The Department shall design and implement the Initiative to expand the
2 number of postsecondary students participating in an internship with a
3 Vermont employer, consistent with the following:

4 (1) Students enrolled in an approved postsecondary institution are
5 eligible for not more than \$3,000.00 for tuition and fees directly related to
6 participating in an internship with a Vermont employer for which they are also
7 receiving postsecondary credit toward a degree.

8 (2) The Department shall enter into an agreement with the Vermont
9 Student Assistance Corporation to develop and administer the Initiative, which
10 shall include an amount not to exceed 7 percent for costs associated with the
11 administration of the program.

12 (c) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report
13 on the number of individuals served through the Initiative and the types of
14 internship opportunities they completed.