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T E S T I M O N Y

To: House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
From: Sarah Buxton, Director of Workforce Development, Department of Labor
Date: March 16, 2022
Subject: VDOL Testimony regarding H.703

Regional Workforce Expansion System:

The following language is proposed to address recent questions submitted by the Committee: (blue is recommended changes; gold is for discussion)

Sec. 5. REGIONAL WORKFORCE EXPANSION SYSTEM

(a) Regional Workforce Expansion System. The amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor. **The goal of this investment is** to launch and lead a coordinated regional system to support the State's workforce expansion efforts that is designed to:

- (1) support employers in tailoring their work requirements, conditions, and expectations to better access local workers;
- (2) collaborate with local education and training providers and regional workforce partners to create and regularly distribute data related to local labor force supply and demand; and
- (3) create and share work-based learning and training opportunities with secondary and postsecondary students, local workforce expansion partners, and others interested in starting or advancing in their career.

(b) System infrastructure.

(1) The Vermont Department of Labor shall make investments that improve and expand regional capacity to connect supply (workers) and demand (employment) in real-time.

(2) The Department shall place in the Barre, Bennington, Brattleboro, Rutland, St. Albans and St. Johnsbury areas, six state-funded Workforce Expansion Specialists who are limited-service, full-time-employees and who shall report to the Workforce Development Division.



(c) Coordination.

(1) The Department shall co-convene regular, regional meetings of education, training, business, and service provider partners; coordinate local workforce information collection and distribution, assist with pilot projects, provide targeted sector support, and develop localized career resources such as information for career counseling, local job fairs, career expos, available to a wide range of stakeholders. **These activities shall align with the federally approved WIOA State Plan and Perkins State Plans, as well as state activities initiated by the State Workforce Development Board.**

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

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

(d) Report. On or before December 15, 2024, the Department shall provide a narrative update on the progress made in hiring staff, establishing interagency agreements, developing regional information exchange systems, and serving jobseekers and employers to the House and Senate Committees of Jurisdiction. The report shall also recommend ongoing metrics that can be easily recorded and reported at the local and State levels on a regular basis to meet multiple information needs.

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

Sec. 7. REPEALS 10 V.S.A. §§ 544 and 545 are repealed.

NOTE: VDOL WILL BRING A REWRITE OF THE REGISTERED AND STATE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM SECTIONS TO THIS COMMITTEE NEXT YEAR AND ASK THAT THEY ARE MOVED FROM TITLE 21 TO THIS PART OF TITLE 10.

Sec. 8. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM

(a) Vermont Work-Based Learning and Training Program. The Department of Labor shall develop the statewide Work-Based Learning and Training Program that serves transitioning



secondary and postsecondary students and Vermonters seeking work-based experience as part of a career **experience or** change and is designed to:

- (1) support Vermonters who are graduating from postsecondary education or a secondary CTE program or who are pursuing a career **experience or** change with a paid on-the-job work experience lasting 12 weeks or less; **(300 people at 4k average; 1.2m)**
- (2) establish a statewide platform available to all employers to list their internships, returnships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship opportunities and for jobseekers to view and access information about specific opportunities **(25k existing)**; and
- (3) support employers by providing them with assistance in developing and implementing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities. **(\$275k existing)**

(b) Definitions. As used in this section:

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

~~(2) "Pre-apprenticeship" is a program of combined learning and workbased experiences that lead to an informal apprenticeship or formal registered apprenticeship program.~~

~~(3) "Registered Apprenticeship" is a program approved by the Vermont Department of Labor as a federally recognized apprenticeship program.~~

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

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

- (1) build and administer the Program; **(125k existing)**
- (2) develop an online platform that will connect students and jobseekers with work-based learning and training opportunities within Vermont; **(25k existing)**
- (3) support work-based learning and training opportunities with public and private employers available to prospective workers located in or relocating to Vermont; **(300 people at 4k average; 1.2m)**
- (4) promote work-based learning and training as a valuable component of a talent pipeline; and
- (5) assist employers in developing meaningful work-based learning and training opportunities. **(\$150k)**

(d) Data; ~~goals~~. The Department shall collect the **following** data: ~~and establish goals and performance measures that demonstrate Program results for activities funded through the~~



Program.

- (1) Total number of participants served,
- (2) Number of participants who received wage assistance or other financial assistance as part of this program and their employment outcome four quarters after completion,
- (3) The number of work-based learning or training opportunities listed on the platform, and
- (4) The number of employers who offered a work-based learning or training opportunity.

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

(f) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report ~~on recommended metrics for measuring~~ Program performance to the relevant committees of jurisdiction.

Sec. 8a. INTERNSHIP COST OFFSET INITIATIVE

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

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

- (1) Students enrolled in an approved postsecondary institution are eligible for not more than \$3,000.00 for tuition and fees directly related to participating in an internship with a Vermont employer for which they are also receiving postsecondary credit toward a degree.
- (2) The Department shall enter into an agreement with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to develop and administer the Initiative, which shall include an amount not to exceed 7 percent for costs associated with the administration of the program.

(c) Reporting. On or before February 15, 2023, the Department shall report **on the number of individuals served through this program and the types of internship opportunities they completed.** ~~recommended metrics for measuring Initiative performance to the relevant committees of jurisdiction.~~

