H.724: An act relating to artificial intelligence and workforce development

Representative Brian Cina

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[H.724](): An act relating to artificial intelligence and workforce development

This bill proposes to implement the recommendations from the Artificial Intelligence Task Force and to create enhancements in education and workforce development programs targeted to artificial intelligence.

Vermont [Artificial Intelligence Task Force FINAL REPORT January 15, 2020]() recommended:

- ☑ The establishment of a permanent commission on artificial intelligence to support its development and propose policy initiatives to make that development responsible.
- ☑ The adoption of an artificial intelligence code of ethics.
- ☐ The creation of incentives for the further development of the artificial intelligence industry.
- ☑ Support for the responsible use of artificial intelligence by state and local agencies.
- ☐ Enhancements in education and workforce development programs targeted to artificial intelligence, with the recommended involvement of Vermont's higher education community.
- ☑ Greater education of the public on the power and opportunity of artificial intelligence and the risks created by it.

Vermont Artificial Intelligence Task Force FINAL REPORT January 15, 2020

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH INCENTIVES

The Task Force proposes that the Vermont Legislature explore incentives and mechanisms to promote the growth of businesses engaged in the ethical development and use of artificial intelligence in Vermont. We find that immediate investment in this area would maximize potential economic benefits and help keep Vermont at the forefront of this technological revolution.

Rationale

One of the greatest benefits of A.I. is economic growth to the State. A.I. related jobs, like other high- tech jobs, can be high paying and environmentally friendly, and don't require significant investment in infrastructure. Vermont has been struggling to attract and retain the type of young talent needed by high-tech companies like A.I. startups. Vermont was recently rated as the state with the greatest likelihood that a highly educated worker in his/her/their thirties was likely to leave the State for better job prospects. In an attempt to counter this 'brain drain', Vermont has recently initiated programs such as the *'Remote Worker Grant'* program, which reimburses expenses up to $5,000 annually to remote workers relocating to Vermont. The Task Force feels that this type of incentive, though not specifically tuned to A.I. workers, is likely to succeed for the type of talent needed for A.I. startups in the State. In addition to these general measures, the Task Force proposes that the State engage higher education to develop pilot programs to increase the attractiveness of Vermont, specifically related to new A.I. startups.

Vermont [Artificial Intelligence Task Force FINAL REPORT January 15, 2020](#)

The Task Force recommends that the State provide **access to accelerated computing.** The current 'training' phase of artificial intelligence can require access to accelerated computing. That type of computing can be cost prohibitive (e.g., $10K/month) for small businesses. Access to local low-cost alternatives would be a powerful incentive to attract small A.I.-related business. The State already has resources that might be leveraged. For example, the State could work with institutions such as UVM which recently upgraded its *Deep Green* supercomputer and already has a very affordable access program that is subsidized by the UVM for the entire state.

The Task Force recommends that the State **create co-working space(s) and provide mentoring support** for the community to develop and build artificial intelligence technology and associated businesses. For example, the State could work with Vermont colleges and Universities to explore the creation of an A.I. co-working and mentoring program for startups doing business in Vermont. The coworking space would allow managed access to a limited amount of space for early phase A.I. startups. Desk space would help the startups manage costs and would allow informal access to professors and graduate students for ad-hoc mentoring. It's also recommended that additional grants for development of hubs or co-location of other spaces be made available as well (e.g., generator spaces and places that offer businesses shared common amenities).

Vermont [Artificial Intelligence Task Force FINAL REPORT January 15, 2020](#)

The Task Force recommends that the State **experiment with a variety of small grants and competitions, administered by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, to promote the development and use of artificial intelligence** to improve quality of life in Vermont.

Here are some examples of possible categories of grants and competitions:

i. The State should **create a small grants program for towns and municipalities to promote the use of A.I. for the public good** in local government and town operations. For example, these grants can fund systems like that developed by the Town of Manchester which invested in a video system allowing actions in high school sports games to be streamed to the public. Similar investments through small grants could make government and other public meetings more accessible through artificial intelligence throughout the state.

ii. The State should **create a grants program for small business innovation that promotes ethical use of A.I.** and identifies pressing issues for Vermont and it's A.I. solutions.

iii. The state should **create a regular cadence of A.I. competitions/"*hackathons*", which incent the public to create innovative uses of artificial intelligence to solve state problems** and improve the lives of Vermonters. Examples would be to engage organizations like *'Code for Vermont'* to create A.I. Hackathons for public good.

Vermont Artificial Intelligence Task Force FINAL REPORT January 15, 2020

RETRAINING AND RESKILLING WORKERS

Recognizing that A.I. will change the nature of work nationally and in Vermont, there is a pressing need to retrain and train the existing and emerging workforce in the new skills that are needed to work with and on A.I. and other new technologies in a way that keeps pace with technological change. The Task Force recommends that the University of Vermont and the State colleges develop affordable and schedule appropriate courses for continuing education and worker retraining in to update technical skills in a way that is aligned with the 2019 Vermont Science and Technology plan and strategies.