

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred Joint
3 Resolution J.R.H. 2 entitled “Joint resolution sincerely apologizing and
4 expressing sorrow and regret to all individual Vermonters and their families
5 and descendants who were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics
6 policies and practices,” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
7 recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the joint resolution be
8 amended by striking out all the Whereas and Resolved clauses and inserting in
9 lieu thereof the following:

10 Whereas, starting in the early 1900s, laws and associated policies were
11 adopted to promote the eugenics movement, and the title of the book *Breeding*
12 *Better Vermonters* by Nancy L. Gallagher accurately describes the movement’s
13 purported intent, and

14 Whereas, this movement targeted for elimination those it deemed currently
15 or potentially delinquent, defective, and dependent persons through
16 sterilizations, primarily of women, to prevent individuals from having children,
17 and

18 Whereas, in 1912, the Vermont General Assembly passed S.79, “An act to
19 authorize and provide for the sterilization of imbeciles, feeble-minded, and
20 insane persons, rapists, confirmed criminals and other defectives,” however,

1 Governor Allen M. Fletcher vetoed the bill, citing constitutional concerns that
2 Attorney General Rufus E. Brown had raised, and

3 Whereas, nevertheless, State agencies and institutions adopted policies and
4 procedures to carry out the intent of the vetoed legislation and the beliefs of the
5 eugenics movement, and

6 Whereas, in 1925, University of Vermont zoology professor Henry F.
7 Perkins, who established the Eugenics Survey of Vermont and served as
8 President of the American Eugenics Society, collaborated with leaders of
9 Vermont State government to collect evidence of Vermonters’ alleged
10 delinquency, dependency, and deficiency, and

11 Whereas, these State-sanctioned policies targeted the poor and persons with
12 mental and physical disabilities, and

13 Whereas, these same policies also targeted individuals, families, and
14 communities whose heritage was documented as French Canadian, French-
15 Indian, or of other mixed ethnic or racial composition and persons whose
16 extended families’ successor generations now identify as Abenaki or as
17 members of other indigenous bands or tribes, and

18 Whereas, in 1927, S.59, “An act relating to Voluntary Eugenic
19 Sterilization” passed the Senate but was defeated in the House, and

20 Whereas, the General Assembly adopted 1931 Acts and Resolves No. 174
21 (Act 174), “An Act for Human Betterment by Voluntary Sterilization,” for the

1 purpose of eliminating from the future Vermont genetic pool persons deemed
2 mentally unfit to procreate, and

3 Whereas, this State-sanctioned eugenics policy was not an isolated example
4 of oppression but reflected the historic marginalization, discriminatory
5 treatment, and displacement of these targeted groups in Vermont, and

6 Whereas, eugenics advocates promoted sterilization for the protection of
7 Vermont’s “old stock” and to preserve the physical and social environment of
8 Vermont for their children, and

9 Whereas, the Eugenics Survey received assistance from State and municipal
10 officials, individuals, and private organizations, and the resulting sterilization,
11 institutionalization, and separation policies intruded on the lives of its victims
12 and had devastating and irreversible impacts that still persist in the lives of the
13 targeted groups and especially the descendants of those who were directly
14 impacted, and

15 Whereas, in conducting the Eugenics Survey, the surveyors were granted
16 access to case files from State agencies and institutions, and the files were
17 made available to persons of authority, including police departments, social
18 workers, educators, and town officials, and

19 Whereas, as a result of the opening of these files, children and adults were
20 removed from families, individuals were institutionalized or incarcerated,

1 family connections were severed, and the sense of kinship, continuity and
2 community was lost, and

3 Whereas, the legacy of the eugenics movement continues to influence some
4 of Vermont’s current policies and legislation, now therefore be it

5 Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

6 That the General Assembly sincerely apologizes and expresses sorrow and
7 regret to all individual Vermonters and their families and descendants who
8 were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices,
9 and be it further

10 Resolved: That the General Assembly continues to work to eradicate the
11 lasting legacy of its prior actions by listening to and working with the affected
12 individuals and communities, and be it further

13 Resolved: That the General Assembly recognizes that further legislative
14 action should be taken to address the continuing impact of State-sanctioned
15 eugenics polices and related practices of disenfranchisement, ethnocide, and
16 genocide.

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3 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE