Representative Stevens of Waterbury moves that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out Sec. 22, 10 V.S.A. § 12, Land Access and Opportunity Board, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof Secs. 22, 22a, 22b, and 22c to read as follows:

Sec. 22. INTENT

It is the intent of the Vermont General Assembly to acknowledge structural racism and address prevalent wealth disparities by creating new opportunities to improve access to woodlands, farmland, and land and home ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities who continue to face barriers to land and home ownership.

Sec. 22a. VERMONT LAND ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD;

APPROPRIATION; SUPPORT

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Board” means the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board.

(2) “VHCB” means the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

(b) The sum of $200,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to VHCB in fiscal year 2023 to administer and support the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board.

(c) In fiscal year 2023, and to the extent that funding is appropriated in fiscal years 2024 and 2025, VHCB shall provide general, accounting, and
administrative support to the Board, including support related to the
administration of Board meetings, compliance with requirements for records
retention and of the Open Meeting Law, processing of per diem compensation
and reimbursement of expenses for Board members, contracting, and
bookkeeping and financial compliance.

Sec. 22b. 10 V.S.A. chapter 15, subchapter 5 is added to read:

Subchapter 5: Land Access and Opportunity Board

§ 325t. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Board” means the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board.

(2) “Historically marginalized or disadvantaged community” means a community that has historically suffered from discrimination and has not had equal access to public or private economic benefits due to the race, ethnicity, gender, geography, language preference, immigrant or citizen status, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or disability status of its members.

(3) “LGBTQ” means an individual who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning.

(4) “VHCB” means the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.
§ 325u. VERMONT LAND ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD

(a) Creation. There is created the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board to promote improvements in access to woodlands, farmland, and land and home ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities who continue to face barriers to land and home ownership. The Board shall be attached to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for administrative purposes.

(b) Organization of Board. The Board shall be composed of:

(1) the Executive Director of Racial Equity or designee;

(2) one member of Indigenous heritage, appointed by the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs;

(3) one member, appointed by the Vermont NAACP;

(4) one member, appointed by the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance;

(5) one member, appointed by Liberation Ecosystem;

(6) one member, appointed by the Vermont Every Town project;

(7) one member, appointed by the National Association of Social Workers, Vermont Chapter, who shall be a social worker with expertise in antiracism;

(8) one member, appointed by the Pride Center of Vermont, who shall be LGBTQ;
(9) one member, appointed by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and
Immigrants Vermont, who shall be a member of a refugee or immigrant
community or shall have experience representing refugee or immigrant
communities, or both; and

(10) one member, appointed by the Vermont Developmental Disabilities
Council.

(c) Member terms; priority.

(1) A member of the Board shall serve a term of three years and until
their successor has been appointed.

(2) In the event of a vacancy occurring during a member’s term, the
vacancy shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term in the same
manner as the original appointment.

(3)(A) When selecting members of the Board, appointing authorities
shall give priority to, and shall seek to appoint, Vermonter.

(i) are a member of a historically marginalized or disadvantaged
community;

(ii) represent the interests of Vermonters from historically
marginalized or disadvantaged communities; or

(iii) have expertise regarding access to housing, land, agriculture,
or credit.
(4) A member may serve not more than two full terms. A member who
is appointed to fill a vacancy occurring during a term may serve two full terms
in addition to the unexpired portion of the term during which the member is
first appointed.

(d) Compensation. Board members shall be entitled to per diem
compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for
meetings as deemed appropriate by the Board within the appropriation
provided. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to VHCB
for the support and administration of the Board.

(e) Meetings. The Executive Director of Racial Equity or designee shall
call the first meeting of the Board to occur on or before September 1, 2022.

(f) Powers and duties of the Board. The Board may do the following:

(1) Advise VHCB regarding policy development and programs to
promote racial, social, economic, and climate justice for Vermonters from
historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

(2) Retain wealth, financial, and real estate advisors who are
Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities and
use the services of those advisors to provide education and guidance for
Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

(3) Retain Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged
communities with expertise in agriculture, agronomics, and natural resource
and land management to provide regenerative natural resource services to
Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

(4) Work with VHCB; the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets; the Departments of Financial Regulation and of Housing and Community Development; the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund; the Vermont Housing Finance Agency; the Vermont State Housing Authority; the Vermont Economic Development Agency; and other State entities to:

(A) develop metrics relevant to historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities to understand disparities and track progress in addressing disparities and improving opportunities; and

(B) develop strategies and plans to more effectively reach out and provide access to resources that can overcome structural barriers to housing and land ownership, including an examination of:

(i) debt-to-income ratios;

(ii) impacts from redlining;

(iii) the impact of algorithmic systems of decision making,

including the impact of credit scores and criminal background checks;

(iv) the impact of shared equity programs and homeownership programs on wealth disparity; and

(v) other practices that increase discrimination, disparities, and inequities in land access, property ownership, and wealth acquisition.
(5) Work with the Department of Taxes to recommend options and opportunities to provide advantageous tax treatment to properties owned by Vermonters who come from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

(6)(A) Review, monitor, and recommend options and opportunities to redress State policies, procedures, practices, laws, and rules related to racial and social equity in property ownership for the benefit of Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

(B) Collaborate with VHCB and other affordable housing stakeholders to recommend programs and related rules to provide loans, grants, and financial assistance to individuals from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

(7) Develop one or more programs with associated rules and procedures to distribute grants, to the extent funds are appropriated for the purpose, for:

(A) community-based groups and programs that will improve land and housing access, safety, and health for historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities; and

(B) individual and collective property and home ownership or housing improvements to support safe and sustainable residences for historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.
(8) Identify, examine, and make recommendations to redress the limitations and problems associated with existing laws, rules, programs, and services related to property ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

§ 325v. ACCEPTANCE OF GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Board may accept from any governmental department or agency, public or private body, or any other source, grants or contributions to be used in carrying out the provisions of this subchapter.

Sec. 22c. INITIAL REPORT; VERMONT LAND ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY BOARD

On or before January 15, 2023, in consultation with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and any contractors hired for this purpose, the Vermont Land Access and Opportunity Board shall submit a written report to the House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs with initial recommendations related to the goals set forth in 10 V.S.A. § 325u. The report and recommendations shall primarily address legal, constitutional, and governance questions relevant to the functions of the Board, including grant making and how to fund, organize, and structure the Board as a permanent instrumentality of the State of Vermont.