

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs to
3 which was referred House Bill No. 703 entitled “An act relating to promoting
4 workforce development” respectfully reports that it has considered the same
5 and recommends that the Senate propose to the House that

6 **Sec. 1. PURPOSE; IMPLEMENTATION**

7 (a) The purpose of this act is to expand opportunities for workforce
8 education, training, and development for Vermonters and to make meaningful
9 investments to support and expand the workforce across the State.

10 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that each recipient of funding
11 through this act shall conduct significant outreach to ensure that all
12 Vermonters, and particularly populations that have experienced unequal access
13 to public or private economic benefits due to geography, socioeconomic status,
14 disability status, gender or gender identity, age, immigration or refugee status,
15 or race, have the opportunity to benefit from the financial and programmatic
16 benefits made available through this act.

17 Sec. 2. IMMEDIATE STRATEGIES AND FUNDING FOR EXPANDING
18 THE LABOR FORCE; INCREASING THE NUMBER OF
19 PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPATION RATES;
20 APPROPRIATIONS

1 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the following amounts are appropriated from the
2 General Fund to the following recipients for the purposes specified:

3 (1) \$2,500,000.00 to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement,
4 in consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, to
5 administer a statewide forgivable loan program of \$5,000.00 per graduate for
6 recent college graduates across all Vermont higher education institutions who
7 commit to work in Vermont for two years after graduation.

8 (2) \$387,000.00 to Vermont Technical College to develop a skilled meat
9 cutter training and apprenticeship facility.

10 (b) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
11 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
12 Funds to the Agency of Human Services to provide grants, which may be
13 administered through a performance-based contract, to refugee- or New
14 American-focused programs working in Vermont to support increased in-
15 migration or retention of recent arrivals.

16 Sec. 3. CTE FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE; FINDINGS

17 (a) Vermont’s career and technical education (CTE) system is critical to
18 ensuring that all Vermonters have access to the high-quality resources they
19 need to explore a wide variety of career pathways, earn a postsecondary
20 credential of value, and establish a productive career.

1 (b) CTE is a vital component of our educational system, supporting and
2 delivering on the goals established by the General Assembly in 2013 Acts and
3 Resolves No. 77 (flexible pathways), 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189
4 (workforce development), and in achieving our attainment goal, which is that
5 70 percent of working-age Vermonters have a credential of value by 2025
6 (10 V.S.A. § 546).

7 (c) CTE is also an equity lever, providing every student access to critical
8 workforce training, postsecondary coursework, and the real-world skills and
9 networks that prepare our youth to continue to earn and learn during and after
10 high school.

11 (d) As of the fall semester of the 2021–2022 school year, students were
12 enrolling in CTE programs at a higher rate than at the beginning of the
13 pandemic, increasing from 4,160 to 4,565. In the 2020–2021 school year,
14 Vermont’s CTE system awarded Tier II credentials of value to 459 students.

15 (e) Since 2015, through legislative initiatives such as 2015 Acts and
16 Resolves No. 51, 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 69, 2018 Acts and Resolves
17 No. 189, 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 80, and most recently 2021 Acts and
18 Resolves No. 74, the General Assembly and other stakeholders in education
19 and in State government have been working to identify, understand, and
20 resolve long-standing concerns related to the functioning of the CTE system.

1 (f) In 2018, the Agency of Education embarked on a collaborative process
2 that included students, legislators, and communities across the State to develop
3 a strategic vision and aspirational goals to help guide the transformation of the
4 CTE system.

5 (g) The State Board of Education adopted the Agency of Education’s
6 vision and goals for CTE that “all Vermont learners attain their postsecondary
7 goals by having access to career and technical education systems that are
8 equitable, efficient, integrated and collaborative.”

9 (h) 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 189 committed Vermont to a redesign of
10 its workforce development and training system, including the approval of up to
11 four pilot sites or projects to examine the way our CTE system is funded and
12 governed.

13 (i) In a report dated June 14, 2021, the Agency of Education reported on its
14 progress, which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report
15 presented possible alternatives to our current funding structure, which is
16 widely seen as a barrier to enrollment. However, these alternatives were based
17 on an examination of only the CTE school district funding model and did not
18 include the study of governance models. The report recommended completing
19 this study of CTE funding and governance models to propose actionable
20 implementation steps for the State.

1 (j) The Agency of Education’s State plan for federal Perkins funds is
2 aligned to the vision and goals created through collaborative processes that
3 included a public comment period. Processes required in the federal
4 legislation like the biennial Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment will
5 strengthen the role of CTE in each region and help to focus the use of limited
6 federal funds to improve the system.

7 Sec. 3a. FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES OF
8 CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN VERMONT

9 (a) There is appropriated to the Joint Fiscal Office Agency of Education for
10 fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$180,000.00 from the General Fund to contract
11 for services to:

12 (1) complete an systematic examination, which was interrupted by
13 COVID-19, of the existing funding structures of career technical education
14 (CTE) in Vermont and how these structures impede or promote the State’s
15 educational and workforce development goals identify the best approach
16 moving forward;

17 (2) examine CTE governance structures in relationship to those funding
18 structures and identify the best approach moving forward;

19 (3) examine the implications of the existing funding and governance
20 structures for kindergarten through grade 12 schools and adult education;

1 ~~(4) examine the funding and alignment of early college and dual~~
2 ~~enrollment;~~

3 ~~(5) consider the CTE funding and governance structures in other states~~
4 ~~in relation to Vermont's unique system of funding education; and~~

5 ~~(4) identify and prioritize potential~~ propose an implementation plan for
6 new models of CTE funding and governance structures ~~to reduce barriers to~~
7 ~~enrollment and~~ to improve the quality, duration, ~~impact,~~ and access to CTE
8 ~~statewide.~~

9 (b) In performing its work, the contractor shall consult with the consultant
10 and any other stakeholders involved in completing the report on the design,
11 implementation, and costs of an integrated and coherent adult basic education,
12 adult secondary education, and postsecondary career and technical education
13 system pursuant to 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.3.

14 (c) On or before March 1, 2023, the Joint Fiscal Office Agency of
15 Education shall issue a written report to the House and Senate Committees on
16 Education, the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development,
17 the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General
18 Affairs, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee
19 on Finance on the work performed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

20 (d)(1) The Agency of Education shall consider the work performed by the
21 contractor and report issued pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and shall

1 develop an implementation plan, including recommended steps to design and
2 implement new funding and governance models.

3 (2) On or before July 1, 2023, the Agency shall issue a written report to
4 the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on
5 Commerce and Economic Development, the Senate Committee on Economic
6 Development, Housing and General Affairs, the House Committee on Ways
7 and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance that describes the results of
8 its work under this subsection and the implementation plan and makes
9 recommendations for legislative action.

10 Sec. 4. INVESTMENT IN THE UP-SKILLING OF PRIVATE SECTOR
11 EMPLOYERS TO SUPPORT THE EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS
12 AND ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS; APPROPRIATIONS

13 In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the
14 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
15 performance-based contract to provide statewide delivery of business coaching
16 and other forms of training to BIPOC business owners, networking and special
17 convenings, and career fairs, workshops and paid internships, career guidance,
18 and other support for BIPOC workers across the State.

1 **Sec. 4a. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT;**

2 **APPROPRIATION; REPORT**

3 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to encourage and support the
4 development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators. To
5 combat the growing educator shortage throughout the State and meet the needs
6 of Vermont students, it is necessary to invest in nontraditional educator
7 training programs.

8 (b) Grant program.

9 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2023, there is established the Peer
10 Review Support Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of
11 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional
12 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of
13 Education's peer review process, with the goal of increased program
14 completion rates.

15 (2) Program administration. The Agency shall adopt policies,
16 procedures, and guidelines necessary for implementation of the Program
17 described in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

18 (3) Eligibility criteria. The Agency shall issue grants to organizations or
19 school districts with programs designed to provide prospective educators in the
20 peer review program the support necessary for successful completion of the
21 peer review process by providing:

1 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

2 (B) local educator lead seminars designed around the Vermont
3 licensure portfolio themes;

4 (C) local educator mentors;

5 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
6 process; and

7 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
8 of licensure.

9 (4) Report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Agency of Education
10 shall report to the Senate and House Committees on Education on the status of
11 the implementation of the Peer Review Support Grant Program and a summary
12 and performance review of the programs to which grants were awarded. The
13 report shall include any metrics used in the performance review, the number of
14 program participants, endorsement areas of participants, feedback from
15 participants and mentors, and any recommendation for legislative action.

16 (c) Appropriation. Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), the sum of
17 \$712,500.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of
18 Education in fiscal year 2023 for the purpose of funding the Peer Review
19 Support Grant Program.

1 Sec. 5. OFFICE OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION TO LEAD AND
2 COORDINATE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE SYSTEM

3 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

4 (1) Vermont is experiencing an acute labor shortage in 2022.

5 (2) According to the Employment and Labor Marketing Information

6 Division of the Vermont Department of Labor:

7 (A) There are approximately 28,000 job openings in Vermont as of
8 December 2021.

9 (B) 9,945 individuals meet the federal statistical definition of
10 unemployed as of January 2022.

11 (C) 4,500 individuals are receiving unemployment insurance
12 assistance as of March 2022.

13 (D) The workforce has shrunk by 26,000 individuals from 2019 to
14 2022, yet the unemployment rate is just three percent as of January 2022.

15 (E) The workforce participation rate has fallen from 66 percent to
16 60.6 percent.

17 (F) The total volume of hires made each year is approximately
18 200,000 nonunique individuals.

19 (3) The Department receives approximately 80 percent of its funding
20 from federal sources, which constrains the Department and its employees from
21 adjusting its work to meet immediate needs.

1 (4) The federal funding for field staff in the Workforce Development
2 Division has declined significantly over the past 20 years, supporting 75
3 persons in 2022 as compared to 135 in 2003.

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

8 (6) Because most State agencies and departments touch the workforce
9 system in some way, there is a need for more coordination and alignment
10 across State government to serve both job seekers and employers.

11 (7) Vermont needs a statewide workforce development, training, and
12 education system in which all Vermonters who want to work, and all
13 employers who want workers, can connect.

14 (b) Creation of Office of Workforce Innovation. The Office of Workforce
15 Innovation is created within the Governor’s office to coordinate statewide and
16 regional workforce expansion across all agencies and departments in State
17 government and among a diverse stakeholder community. The State
18 Workforce Development Board shall be managed by the Office.

19 (1) Purpose. The purposes of the Office of Workforce Innovation
20 include:

21 (A) interagency coordination around Governor’s work force agenda;

1 (B) serving as the developer and holder of a statewide work force
2 development plan, including supporting the work of the State Workforce
3 Development Board and contracting with outside process entities as needed to
4 help convene all system actors;

5 (C) occasionally convening stakeholders;

6 (D) connecting to National Governors Association best practices
7 research;

8 (E) endeavoring to have practices implemented throughout the
9 system;

10 (F) coordinating across State entities to ensure well-coordinated State
11 responses and programs to carry out Governor’s work force agenda;

12 (G) overseeing service delivery by State employees and outside
13 contracts at the local and regional levels;

14 (H) ensuring interagency communication;

15 (I) coordination and collaboration to break down silos and to
16 maximize communication flow; and

17 (J) collaborating with State-level organizations, service providers,
18 and educational institutions.

19 (2) Personnel. The Director of the Office of Workforce Innovation is
20 created. There shall be two full-time exempt staff to accomplish the duties of

1 the Office. One of these staff positions shall be the current Executive Director
2 of the State Workforce Developmental Board.

3 (3) Duties. The Director of the Office of the Workforce Innovation
4 shall:

5 (A) lead Workforce Development and Expansion for the State;

6 (B) provide interagency coordination and strategic and
7 comprehensive policy leadership for the purpose of workforce development,
8 expansion, training, and education in the State;

9 (C) determine where Adult CTE should live and how it should be
10 financed; and

11 (D) complete a feasibility study to assess creating a recyclable and
12 outcome-based funding mechanism to deploy State workforce training funding
13 for re- and up- skilling individuals in strategic sectors and submit findings and
14 recommendations in a report to the Vermont Workforce Development Board;

15 (E) perform any other duties that are relevant based on the purpose of
16 this section.

17 (4) Coordination. The Office shall convene interagency and State-level
18 service provider partners, coordinate State-level workforce information
19 collection and distribution, establish interagency working agreements, manage
20 the State Workforce Development Board, and consider other improvements to
21 the structure, coordination, and collaboration of the workforce development

1 system in general. This may include creating a Vermont workforce
2 development network.

3 (5) Implementation.

4 (A) The Office of Workforce Innovation shall be established as of
5 July 1, 2022.

6 (B) On or before January 15, 2023, the Office shall submit an interim
7 report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and
8 Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
9 proposing goals and metrics to measure, and action steps to accomplish, how
10 the Office can effectively coordinate the workforce development system and
11 improve workforce development conditions in this State relative to the data
12 points specified in subsection (a) of this section.

13 (C) On or before December 1, 2023, the Office shall submit a final
14 report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and
15 Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
16 that addresses its performance relative to the goals, metrics, and action items it
17 has adopted, and that includes findings and any recommendations for
18 legislative action concerning the workforce development system.

19 (6) Appropriation. The amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from
20 the General Fund to create the Office and perform its duties.

1 Sec. 5a. REGIONAL WORKFORCE EXPANSION SYSTEM

2 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

3 (1) Vermont is experiencing an acute labor shortage in 2022.

4 (2) According to the Employment and Labor Marketing Information

5 Division of the Vermont Department of Labor:

6 (A) There are approximately 28,000 job openings in Vermont as of
7 December 2021.

8 (B) 9,945 individuals meet the federal statistical definition of
9 unemployed as of January 2022.

10 (C) 4,500 individuals are receiving unemployment insurance
11 assistance as of March 2022.

12 (D) The workforce has shrunk by 26,000 individuals from 2019 to
13 2022, yet the unemployment rate is just three percent as of January 2022.

14 (E) The workforce participation rate has fallen from 66 percent to
15 60.6 percent.

16 (3) The Department receives approximately 80 percent of its funding
17 from federal sources, which constrains the Department and its employees from
18 adjusting its work to meet immediate needs.

19 (4) The federal funding for field staff in the Workforce Development
20 Division has declined significantly over the past 20 years, supporting 75
21 persons in 2022 as compared to 135 in 2003.

1 (5) 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 \$1,500,000.00
6 \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Labor
7 for a one-year pilot program to launch and lead a coordinated regional system,
8 beginning in two regions of the State, to work toward accomplishing the
9 following goals:

10 (1) increase local labor participation rate;

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

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

13 (4) collect, organize, develop, and share information related to local
14 career pathways with workforce development partners.

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

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

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

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

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

6 (d) System infrastructure. The Department shall make investments that
7 improve and expand regional capacity to strengthen networks who assist
8 jobseekers, workers, and employers in connecting.

9 (1) The Department is authorized to create [three?] classified, one-year
10 limited-service positions, with funding allocated to perform the work described
11 in this section, who shall report to the Workforce Development Division and of
12 whom:

13 (A) [two?] shall be Workforce Expansion Specialists assigned, one
14 each, to two different regions of the State; and

15 (B) [one?] shall provide oversight and State-level coordination of
16 activities.

17 (2)(A) The Department shall use funds allocated to develop systems for
18 coordination, information sharing, and enhanced support to regional partners,
19 host regional meetings, develop regional plans, and provide localized resources
20 including labor market information, training and development opportunities,
21 and support services.

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

5 ~~(e) Coordination.~~

6 ~~(1) The Department shall convene regional meetings of education,~~
7 ~~training, business, and service provider partners; coordinate local workforce~~
8 ~~information collection and distribution; and assist in developing localized~~
9 ~~career resources, such as information for career counseling, local job fairs, and~~
10 ~~career expos, that will be available to a wide range of stakeholders.~~

11 ~~(2) Service provider partners shall include community partners who~~
12 ~~directly serve mature workers, youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals~~
13 ~~who have been involved with the correction system, BIPOC Vermonters, New~~
14 ~~Americans, and other historically marginalized populations in efforts to align~~
15 ~~service delivery, share information, and achieve greater employment outcomes~~
16 ~~for Vermonters.~~

17 (e) Interim report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Department shall
18 provide a narrative update on the progress made in hiring staff, establishing
19 interagency agreements, developing regional information exchange systems,
20 and supporting State-level work to expand the labor force to the House and
21 Senate committees of jurisdiction.

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

3 Sec. 6. INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS; WORKFORCE
4 DEVELOPMENT; PILOT PROGRAM

5 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to facilitate the education and
6 vocational training of incarcerated individuals so that they have a greater
7 likelihood of obtaining gainful employment and positively contributing to
8 society upon reintegration into the community.

9 (b) Policy; appropriations.

10 (1)(A) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$420,000.00 is appropriated
11 from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections, in consultation with
12 the Vermont Department of Labor, to address education and vocational
13 enhancement needs. These funds shall not be allocated from any amounts
14 budgeted for Justice Reinvestment II initiatives.

15 (B) The Department shall use the funds allocated for the development
16 of education and vocational training for incarcerated individuals residing in a
17 Vermont correctional facility prior to community reintegration. The
18 Department may allocate the funds over three years, consistent with the
19 following:

20 (i) \$270,000.00 for transition development, including equipment
21 and mobile labs in one or more sites;

1 (ii) \$100,000.00 for training partner support; and

2 (iii) \$50,000.00 for curriculum development.

3 (2) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from
4 the General Fund to the Department of Corrections, which may be allocated
5 over not more than three years, to establish a community-based pilot reentry
6 program at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility in consultation with
7 the Vermont Department of Labor. The Department of Corrections shall
8 designate a service provider to administer the pilot program’s goals to:

9 (A) provide continuity of services for incarcerated individuals;

10 (B) expand current employment readiness programs within the
11 facility by building pathways for coordinated transition to employment;

12 (C) focus on the first six months after individuals are released from
13 the facility;

14 (D) coordinate with local community resources, parole and probation
15 offices, and other supports to ensure successful transition into the community;

16 (E) assist individuals in successfully transitioning into new jobs; and

17 (F) work with employers to support successful hiring and best
18 practices to support incarcerated individuals.

19 (c) Report. On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Corrections
20 shall create and submit a report on workforce and education training programs
21 in correctional facilities to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee;

1 the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Commerce and
2 Economic Development; and the Senate Committees on Economic
3 Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Judiciary. The report shall:

4 (1) identify program design, logistical needs, and policy changes to
5 current Department of Corrections facility-based training and educational
6 programs necessary to successfully enable incarcerated individuals’
7 reintegration into their communities, including changes to programs that
8 enhance individuals’ skill development, knowledge, and other support needed
9 to qualify for and secure a position in a critical occupation in Vermont;

10 (2) identify disparities of outcomes and recommend solutions for
11 incarcerated Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color concerning facility-based
12 training, educational programming, and successful community reintegration;

13 (3) provide an update on the Department of Corrections’ use of
14 education and vocational enhancement funding in fiscal year 2023;

15 (4) provide recommendations on what aspects of the pilot program
16 should be replicated in other correctional facilities in Vermont; and

17 (5) provide recommended legislation for the continuation of the pilot
18 program or any changes.

1 Sec. 7. INTENT

2 It is the intent of the General Assembly to improve the recruitment and
3 retention of correctional officers to ensure adequate staffing and safe working
4 conditions in facilities operated by the Department of Corrections.

5 Sec. 8. IMPROVEMENT OF CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

6 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION; REPORT

7 (a) On or before January 15, 2023, the Secretary of Human Services, in
8 consultation with the Commissioners of Corrections and of Human Resources,
9 shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations, on
10 Commerce and Economic Development, on Corrections and Institutions, and
11 on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on
12 Government Operations, and on Judiciary identifying conditions that pose an
13 obstacle to the successful recruitment and retention of correctional officers and
14 setting forth a plan to improve the recruitment and retention of correctional
15 officers.

16 (b)(1) The report shall specifically analyze the impact of the following on
17 the recruitment and retention of correctional officers:

18 (A) wages and benefits;

19 (B) terms and conditions of employment;

1 (C) working conditions in Department of Corrections facilities,
2 including health and safety issues and the physical condition of the facilities;
3 and

4 (D) staffing levels and overtime.

5 (2) The report shall, for each of the issues examined pursuant to
6 subdivision (1) of this subsection, analyze how the following states compare to
7 Vermont and shall identify any best practices in those states that could improve
8 recruitment and retention of correctional officers in Vermont:

9 (A) Maine;

10 (B) New Hampshire;

11 (C) New York;

12 (D) Massachusetts;

13 (E) Rhode Island; and

14 (F) Connecticut.

15 (c) The report shall, as part of the plan to improve the recruitment and
16 retention of correctional officers, identify specific administrative and
17 legislative actions that are necessary to successfully improve the recruitment
18 and retention of correctional officers.

1 Sec. 9. ASSESSMENT OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
2 INITIATIVES; REPORT

3 (a) On or before January 15, 2023, the Secretary of Human Services, in
4 consultation with the Commissioner of Human Resources, shall submit to the
5 House and Senate Committees on Appropriations a report regarding the use of
6 funds appropriated pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves, No. 83:

7 (1) Sec. 14 for employee recruitment and retention at:

8 (A) the secure residential recovery facility; and

9 (B) the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital;

10 (2) Sec. 68 for employee retention with respect to:

11 (A) the Department of Corrections; and

12 (B) the Vermont Veteran’s Home; and

13 (3) Sec. 72 for workforce recruitment and retention incentives with
14 respect to designated and specialized service agencies, including shared living
15 providers.

16 (b) The report shall assess how effective the appropriations identified
17 pursuant to subsection (a) of this section were in addressing issues related to
18 employee recruitment and retention; identify any ongoing or remaining
19 employee recruitment and retention challenges that the recipients have; and
20 identify any potential legislative, administrative, or programmatic changes that
21 can address those ongoing or remaining employee retention issues.

1 (c) The report shall also include a recommendation as to whether and how
2 to appropriate additional funds in the 2023 Budget Adjustment Act to address
3 ongoing recruitment and retention challenges at:

4 (1) the Vermont Veteran’s Home;

5 (2) the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital;

6 (3) the secure residential recovery facility;

7 (4) designated and specialized service agencies; and

8 (5) the Department of Corrections’ facilities with respect to individuals
9 employed as a Correctional Officer I or a Correctional Officer II.

10 Sec. 10. REPEALS

11 10 V.S.A. §§ 544 and 545 are repealed.

12 Sec. 11. 10 V.S.A. § 547 is added to read:

13 § 547. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 (1) build and administer the Program;

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

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

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

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

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

9 (1) the total number of participants served;

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

13 (3) the average wage of participants in subdivision (2) of this subsection
14 at the start of the Program and the average wage of participants one year after
15 completion;

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

18 (5) the number of employers who offered a work-based learning or
19 training opportunity.

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

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

6 Sec. 12. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAM;

7 APPROPRIATION

8 In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 General Fund to the Department of Labor to implement the Vermont Work-
10 Based Learning and Training Program created in Sec. 11 of this act. Of this
11 amount, the Department may use not more than \$100,000.00 for the cost of
12 administration.

13 ~~Sec. 13. SECONDARY STUDENT INDUSTRY RECOGNIZED~~

14 ~~CREDENTIAL PILOT PROJECT~~

15 ~~(a) Pilot Project creation. The Department of Labor, in consultation with~~
16 ~~the Agency of Education, shall design and implement the Secondary Student~~
17 ~~Industry Recognized Credential Pilot Project to provide funding for an eligible~~
18 ~~secondary student to take an eligible adult career and technical education~~
19 ~~course.~~

20 ~~(b) Eligible courses. A course is eligible for the Pilot Project if it is:~~

1 ~~(1) offered at a regional CTE center, as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 1522(4);~~
2 ~~and qualifies as adult career technical education or postsecondary career~~
3 ~~technical education, as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 1522(11) and (12);~~

4 ~~(2) offered during the summer, evening or weekend while secondary~~
5 ~~school is in session or during the summer; and~~

6 ~~(3) included as an element of the student's personalized learning plan~~
7 ~~and reasonably related to the student's career goals.~~

8 ~~(c) Eligible student. A student is eligible for the Pilot Project if:~~

9 ~~(1) the student is a Vermont resident attending a Vermont public school~~
10 ~~or an independent secondary school that is eligible for public funding;~~

11 ~~(2) the student has completed grade 11 and has not received a high~~
12 ~~school diploma; and~~

13 ~~(3) the student's secondary school and the regional CTE center~~
14 ~~determine that the student:~~

15 ~~(A) is prepared to succeed in the course;~~

16 ~~(B) meets the prerequisites for the course; and~~

17 ~~(C) has exhausted other sources of available funding prior to~~
18 ~~submitting an application.~~

19 ~~(d) Administration.~~

- 1 ~~(1) Not later than 30 days after the effective date of this section, the~~
2 ~~Department of Labor, in consultation with the Agency of Education, shall~~
3 ~~develop and make available an application for funding that includes:~~
- 4 ~~(A) student's enrollment status;~~
 - 5 ~~(B) course information;~~
 - 6 ~~(C) a copy of the student's personalized learning plan;~~
 - 7 ~~(D) attestation that the secondary and adult career technical education~~
8 ~~programs find the program of study appropriate for the student;~~
 - 9 ~~(E) description of federal and local funding sources that were~~
10 ~~explored but insufficient or unavailable for use by the student; and~~
 - 11 ~~(F) other information the Department requires to determine~~
12 ~~eligibility.~~
- 13 ~~(2) A student's secondary school shall timely complete and submit an~~
14 ~~application to the Department of Labor on behalf of the student.~~
- 15 ~~(3) The Department of Labor shall:~~
- 16 ~~(A) review the application and, if appropriate, meet with the student~~
17 ~~to determine eligibility for existing federal and State programs, including~~
18 ~~WIOA Title I Youth (in-school) and the Vermont Youth Employment~~
19 ~~Program; and~~

1 ~~(B) provide a copy of the application to the Agency of Education,~~
2 ~~which shall determine whether Agency funding is available and notify the~~
3 ~~Department of its determination within 10 business days.~~

4 ~~(4) The Department shall provide funding for the tuition cost for one~~
5 ~~course to eligible students on a first come, first served basis:~~

6 ~~(A) from State or federal sources that are available through the~~
7 ~~Department or Agency; or~~

8 ~~(B) if funding is unavailable from those sources, from the amounts~~
9 ~~available in the Department's fiscal year 2023 budget, not to exceed~~
10 ~~\$100,000.00.~~

11 ~~(5) For students who meet annual low income qualifications under the~~
12 ~~Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Department may provide~~
13 ~~funds to purchase books, supplies, exam fees, and equipment.~~

14 ~~(6) A regional CTE center shall not receive more than \$20,000.00~~
15 ~~through the program in each fiscal year.~~

16 ~~(e) Regional CTE center report. The Department of Labor shall require a~~
17 ~~report from each regional CTE center providing information to support the~~
18 ~~Department's reporting requirements in subsections (f) and (g) of this section.~~

19 ~~(f) Interim Report. The Department of Labor and Agency of Education~~
20 ~~shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House~~
21 ~~Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate~~

1 ~~Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on or~~
2 ~~before the January 15, 2023 regarding the use of funds, including data relating~~
3 ~~to student circumstances, levels of participation, and how local school districts~~
4 ~~are able or unable to meet the career preparation and training needs of~~
5 ~~secondary students using the program.~~

6 ~~(g) Final Report. The Department of Labor and Agency of Education shall~~
7 ~~report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House~~
8 ~~Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, the Senate Committee~~
9 ~~on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, the House~~
10 ~~Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance within~~
11 ~~45 days following the end of the fiscal year or exhaustion of funds, whichever~~
12 ~~comes first, regarding the use of funds, including data relating to the number of~~
13 ~~participants, student circumstances, levels of participation, what certifications~~
14 ~~were issued, how local school districts are able or unable to meet the career~~
15 ~~preparation and training needs of secondary students using the program, and~~
16 ~~recommendations on how to address gaps in access and funding for secondary~~
17 ~~students seeking professional certifications not offered through the secondary~~
18 ~~education system.~~

19 Sec. 14. THE VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

20 ~~(a) The Vermont Trades Scholarship Program is created and shall be~~
21 ~~administered by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont~~

1 Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse initial licensing fees, exam fees,
2 and tuition payments under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals,
3 subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

4 (b) To be eligible for a scholarship under the Program, an individual,
5 whether a resident or nonresident, shall:

6 (1) be enrolled in an industry-recognized training and certification
7 program that leads to initial employment or career advancement in a building,
8 mechanical, industrial, or medical trade; emergency services, including
9 paramedics; energy; transportation; broadband; or robotics; or other high
10 demand sector;

11 (2) demonstrate financial need;

12 (3) register with the Vermont Department of Labor for the purpose of
13 receiving relevant job referrals, if unemployed; and

14 (4) agree to work in their profession in Vermont for a minimum of one
15 year following licensure or certification completion for each year of
16 scholarship awarded.

17 (c)(1) The Corporation shall give preference to students attending a
18 Vermont-based training program or, if one isn't available for their certification,
19 an offer of employment or promotion from a Vermont employer upon
20 completion.

1 (2) The Corporation shall give priority to applicants who have not
2 received other assistance.

3 (d) There shall be no deadline to apply for a scholarship under this section.
4 Scholarships shall be awarded on a rolling basis if funds are available, and any
5 funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over and shall be available
6 to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to
7 award additional scholarships as set forth in this section.

8 (e) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of ~~\$3,000,000.00~~ \$3,500,000.00 is
9 appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance
10 Corporation for scholarships for trades students under the Vermont Trades
11 Scholarship Program.

12 ~~Sec. 14a. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES; OUTREACH~~

13 ~~The Department of Health, the Department of Labor, and the Vermont~~
14 ~~Student Assistance Corporation shall coordinate outreach efforts to ensure that~~
15 ~~emergency service personnel are aware of, and able to access, the opportunities~~
16 ~~for professional development available through programs in this act.~~

17 ~~Sec. 14a. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES~~

18 ~~In fiscal year 2023, the following amounts are appropriated from the~~
19 ~~General Fund to the Department of Health to support EMS workforce~~
20 ~~development:~~

1 ~~(1) \$450,000.00 for a voucher program to support students pursuing~~
2 ~~initial EMS or upgrade educational credits;~~

3 ~~(2) \$300,000.00 for paramedic education reimbursement;~~

4 ~~(3) \$100,000.00 for EMS courses in underserved EMS districts;~~

5 ~~(4) \$37,500.00 for critical care paramedic education; and~~

6 ~~(5) \$62,500.00 for EMS continuing education.~~

7 ~~Sec. 15. THE VERMONT TRADES LOAN REIMBURSEMENT~~

8 ~~PROGRAM~~

9 ~~(a) The Vermont Trades Loan Repayment Reimbursement Program is~~
10 ~~created and shall be administered by the Vermont Student Assistance~~
11 ~~Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse~~
12 ~~funds under the Program to eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of~~
13 ~~funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.~~

14 ~~(b) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual,~~
15 ~~shall:~~

16 ~~(1) be a Vermont resident; and~~

17 ~~(2) be employed in an occupation in the building, mechanical, industrial,~~
18 ~~or medical trades, or in the clean energy, energy efficiency, weatherization, or~~
19 ~~clean transportation sectors, for an average of at least 30 hours per week for~~
20 ~~least one full calendar year before applying.~~

1 ~~(c) For every year of work in a qualifying occupation, an individual shall~~
2 ~~be eligible for up to \$5,000.00 in loan repayment reimbursement.~~

3 ~~Reimbursements shall not exceed the total amount of educational debt owed.~~

4 ~~(d) There shall be no deadline to apply for loan repayment reimbursement~~
5 ~~under this section. Loan repayment shall be awarded on a rolling basis if funds~~
6 ~~are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over~~
7 ~~and shall be available to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation in the~~
8 ~~following fiscal year to award additional loan repayment as set forth in this~~
9 ~~section.~~

10 ~~(e) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the~~
11 ~~General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for loan~~
12 ~~repayment for trades professionals under the Program.~~

13 Sec. 16. CTE CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION

14 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAM; REVOLVING LOAN
15 FUND

16 (a) Purpose. This section authorizes and provides funding for the CTE
17 Construction and Rehabilitation Experiential Learning Program and Revolving
18 Loan Fund, the purposes of which are to:

19 (1) expand the experiential and educational opportunities for high school
20 and adult CTE students to work directly on construction projects;

1 (2) build community partnerships among CTE centers, housing
2 organizations, government, and private businesses;

3 (3) beautify communities and rehabilitate buildings that are
4 underperforming assets;

5 (4) expand housing access to Vermonters in communities throughout the
6 State; and

7 (5) improve property values while teaching high school and adult
8 students trade skills.

9 (b) Appropriation; creation of fund; administration.

10 (1) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of ~~\$15,000,000.00~~ \$10,000,000.00 is
11 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Vermont Housing and
12 Conservation Board to create and administer the CTE Construction and
13 Rehabilitation Experiential Learning Program and Revolving Loan Fund
14 pursuant to this section.

15 (2) The Board may use not more than five percent of the Fund for its
16 costs of administration.

17 (c) Proposals; applications; funding.

18 (1) A regional CTE center, working in collaboration with one or more
19 housing and community partners, private businesses, nonprofit organizations,
20 or municipalities, shall identify construction projects that would be relevant

1 and appropriate for CTE students enrolled in construction, electrical,
2 plumbing, design, business management, or other CTE programs ~~including:~~

3 ~~(A) rehabilitation of residential properties that are blighted or not~~
4 ~~code compliant;~~

5 ~~(B) new residential construction projects or improvements to land in~~
6 ~~eases of critical community need; and~~

7 ~~(C) commercial construction projects that have substantial~~
8 ~~community benefit.~~

9 (2) Prior to or during the application process, a CTE center and its
10 partners ~~may~~ **shall** consult with the Board **and other organizations** to identify
11 and consider potential funding partners to leverage amounts available through
12 the Fund.

13 (3) A CTE center and its partners shall apply to the Board for funding
14 by submitting a project application that includes the information required by
15 the Board and addresses the following:

16 (A) the educational benefits for students and fit with the CTE
17 curriculum;

18 (B) the community benefits for the neighborhood, municipality, or
19 region in which the project is located; and

20 (C) the partners with whom the CTE center is collaborating and the
21 respective responsibility for the aspects of a project, including:

- 1 (i) educational instruction and academic credit;
- 2 (ii) project management;
- 3 (iii) insurance coverage for students and the property;
- 4 (iv) compensation and benefits, including compliance with labor
- 5 laws, standards, and practices; and
- 6 (v) property acquisition, ownership, and transfer.

7 (4) A CTE center may use funding for, and shall specify in its
8 application the allocation of costs associated with:

9 (A) acquisition, design, permitting, construction, marketing, and
10 other building-related expenses; and

11 (B) costs for labor, including for student wages and for instructor
12 compensation during the academic year as well as for summer or other work
13 that is not otherwise budgeted during the academic year.

14 (d) Eligibility; review; approval. The Board may approve an application
15 that includes the information required by subsection (c) of this section and
16 provide funding for a project that meets the following eligibility criteria:

17 (1) The project involves the rehabilitation of one of the following types
18 of property that require repair and improvement:

19 (A) blighted or otherwise non-code-compliant residential property
20 that results in a building with not more than four dwelling units that are

1 affordable to seniors, households with lower income, or other communities that
2 need access to affordable housing;

3 (B) municipal facilities;

4 (C) school buildings or related educational facilities; or

5 (D) commercial construction projects that have substantial
6 community benefit.

7 or new residential construction projects or improvements to land in
8 cases of critical need.

9 (2) The project includes a weatherization component.

10 (3) Students working on the project receive academic credit, a
11 competitive wage, or both.

12 (e) Affordability; flexibility. If appropriate in the circumstances, the Board
13 may shall condition funding for a project on the inclusion of one or
14 mechanisms addressing the affordability of the property upon rent or sale.

15 (f) Funding; proceeds; revolving loans.

16 (1) The Board shall provide funding for projects from the amounts
17 available in the Fund in the form of zero-interest loans, in an amount, for a
18 period, and upon terms specified by the Board.

19 (2) If a completed project results in a gain for a CTE center, upon the
20 sale or transfer of a completed project, or upon completion of any
21 rehabilitation work, the CTE center shall return any loan proceeds and any

1 profits realized to the Board to provide funding for future projects through the
2 Fund.

3 (3) If a completed project results in a loss for the CTE center, upon the
4 sale or transfer of a completed project, or upon completion of any
5 rehabilitation work, the Board shall hold the CTE center harmless for the
6 amount of the loss and the CTE center shall return any remaining loan funds to
7 the Board to provide funding for future projects through the Fund.

8 (g) Eligible CTE Center. For purposes of the Program, an existing
9 alternative technical education provider that receives funding from the
10 Education Fund may participate in the Program if:

11 (1) the regional CTE Center for a region chooses not to participate in the
12 Program; and

13 (2) the alternative technical education provider can offer a comparable
14 educational opportunity through the Program for technical students in that
15 region.

16 (h) Report. The Board shall address the implementation of this section in
17 its annual report to the General Assembly.

18 **Sec. 17. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION; FINDINGS**

19 **The General Assembly finds that:**

1 (1) while child care is an essential component of Vermont’s economy,
2 research has shown that three out of five of Vermont’s youngest children do
3 not have access to the child care needed by their families;

4 (2) according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, early
5 childhood educators are the lowest paid college graduates of any degree
6 program in the country;

7 (3) the Council for a Strong America found in a national economic
8 impact study that the U.S. economy loses \$57 billion annually due to child care
9 challenges;

10 (4) the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that high quality
11 child care is a powerful two-generation workforce development strategy that
12 strengthens today’s workforce and puts children on the path to develop well
13 and enter kindergarten ready to thrive in school, work, and life;

14 (5) the Vermont Early Care and Learning Dividend Study found that
15 increased investment in early care and education, as described in the
16 recommendations of Vermont’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High
17 Quality Affordable Child Care, would yield \$3.08 for every additional dollar
18 invested into the system;

19 (6) 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 45 established goals that no Vermont
20 family spend more than 10 percent of its income on child care and that early

1 childhood educators receive compensation commensurate with their peers in
2 similar fields as informed by a systems analysis and financing study;

3 (7) while the State works toward achieving these goals, the COVID-19
4 pandemic has exacerbated already pressing challenges, making it even harder
5 for families to find affordable high-quality child care and more difficult for
6 early childhood education programs to find and retain qualified educators; and

7 (8) according to a recent study by the National Association for the
8 Education of Young Children, 71 percent of center-based child care programs
9 in Vermont reported experiencing a staffing shortage.

10 Sec. 18. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

11 It is the intent of the General Assembly that immediate action is necessary
12 to support Vermont's economy; ensure that all families with young children
13 have access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education; and ensure
14 that Vermont's early childhood educators, the backbone of our economy, are
15 well-supported.

16 Sec. 18a. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; EMPLOYEE EDUCATION
17 PROGRAMS

18 On or before January 15, 2023, the Agency of Human Services shall
19 catalogue all educational programs and opportunities it makes available to its
20 employees, including identifying which programs and opportunities are offered
21 to which employees, and report those findings to the House Committees on

1 Health Care and on Human Services and the Senate Committee on Health and
2 Welfare.

3 **H.703 – Senate Health and Welfare recommendations on health care**
4 **workforce**

5 **VSAC recommendations added in green**

6 Sec. 19. HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

7 (a) The General Assembly values all health care workers, at every level and
8 in each component of the health care system. The General Assembly also
9 acknowledges the many struggles faced by health care workers and that the
10 pandemic has placed further strain on an already taxed system. Many health
11 care workers have not had their pay adjusted over time to address increases in
12 the cost of living, essentially amounting to pay cuts from year to year. Health
13 care workers have experienced burnout, trauma, and moral injuries due to a
14 history of underfunding and the present stress of the pandemic. **In addition,**
15 **the combination of the pandemic and continued health care workforce**
16 **shortages has created an unsustainable reliance on traveling nurses that**
17 **must be addressed.**

18 (b) In order to retain and recruit health care workers in Vermont, it is the
19 intent of the General Assembly to invest in multiple solutions aimed at
20 reinforcing our health care workforce in the present and sustaining our health
21 care workers into the future.

1 Sec. 20. EMERGENCY GRANTS TO SUPPORT NURSE FACULTY AND
2 STAFF

3 (a) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of ~~\$3,000,000.00~~ **\$1,000,000.00** is
4 appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State
5 Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Department of Health and shall carry forward for
6 the purpose of providing emergency interim grants to Vermont’s nursing
7 schools over ~~three~~ **two** years to increase the compensation for their nurse
8 faculty and staff, with ~~\$1,000,000.00~~ **\$500,000.00** to be distributed in each of
9 fiscal years 2023; ~~and 2024; and 2025~~ to increase the compensation for each
10 full-time-equivalent (FTE) member of the clinical and didactic nurse faculty
11 and staff. The Department shall distribute the funds among the nursing schools
12 in Vermont equitably based on each school’s proportion of nursing faculty and
13 staff to the total number of FTE nursing faculty and staff across all nursing
14 schools statewide.

15 (b) If the nurse faculty or staff, or both, of a nursing school receiving a
16 grant under this section are subject to a collective bargaining agreement, the
17 use of the grant funds provided to the nursing school for those faculty or staff,
18 or both, shall be subject to impact bargaining between the nursing school and
19 the collective bargaining representative of the nurse faculty or staff, or both, to
20 the extent required by the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

1 Sec. 21. NURSE PRECEPTOR INCENTIVE GRANTS; HOSPITALS;
2 WORKING GROUP; REPORT

3 (a)(1) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of ~~\$2,400,000.00~~ **\$1,400,000.00** is
4 appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to
5 provide incentive grants to hospital-employed nurses in Vermont to serve as
6 preceptors for nursing students enrolled in Vermont nursing school programs.
7 The Agency shall distribute the funds to hospitals employing nurses who
8 provide student preceptor supervision based on the number of preceptor hours
9 to be provided, at a rate of \$5.00 per preceptor hour, or a lesser hourly rate if
10 the need exceeds the available funds. **The Agency shall prioritize funding for**
11 **hospitals that provide matching funds for additional preceptor compensation or**
12 **that commit to providing future compensation and support to expanding the**
13 **number of preceptors.**

14 (2) If nurse preceptors receiving compensation pursuant to a grant
15 awarded to a hospital under this section are subject to a collective bargaining
16 agreement, the use of the grant funds provided to the hospital for the nurse
17 preceptors shall be subject to impact bargaining between the hospital and the
18 collective bargaining representative of the nurses to the extent required by the
19 collective bargaining agreement.

20 (b)(1) The Director of Health Care Reform or designee in the Agency of
21 Human Services shall convene a working group of stakeholders representing

1 nursing schools, **the Vermont Area Health Education Centers**, long-term
2 care facilities, designated and specialized service agencies, federally qualified
3 health centers, home health agencies, primary care practices, and other health
4 care facilities to:

5 (A) identify ways to increase clinical placement opportunities across
6 a variety of health care settings for nursing students enrolled in Vermont
7 nursing school programs, **including exploring opportunities for**
8 **participation through remote means;**

9 (B) establish sustainable funding models for compensating nurses
10 serving as preceptors or for supporting the hiring of additional nurses to
11 alleviate the pressures on nurse preceptors, or both; and

12 (C) develop an action plan for implementing the clinical placement
13 expansion and sustainable funding models identified and established pursuant
14 to subdivisions (A) and (B) of this subdivision (1), including addressing the
15 need for student housing opportunities.

16 (2) On or before January 15, 2023, the Director of Health Care Reform
17 shall provide the working group’s action plan and any recommendations for
18 legislative action to the House Committees on Health Care, on Commerce and
19 Economic Development, and on Appropriations and the Senate Committees on
20 Health and Welfare, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs,
21 and on Appropriations.

1 Sec. 22. HEALTH CARE EMPLOYER NURSING PIPELINE AND
2 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

3 (a) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of ~~\$3,000,000.00~~ **\$2,000,000.00** is
4 appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State
5 Fiscal Recovery Funds to the ~~Vermont Student Assistance Corporation~~
6 **Vermont State College System** and shall carry forward for the purpose of
7 providing grants to health care employers, including hospitals, long-term care
8 facilities, designated and specialized service agencies, federally qualified
9 health centers, and other health care providers, to establish or expand
10 partnerships with Vermont nursing schools to create nursing pipeline or
11 apprenticeship programs, or both, that will train members of the health care
12 employers' existing staff, including personal care attendants, licensed nursing
13 assistants, and licensed practical nurses, to become higher-level nursing
14 professionals. Through a combination of scholarship awards, grants awarded
15 to health care employers pursuant to this section, and the health care
16 employer's contributions, the trainees' tuition and fees shall be covered in full,
17 and trainees shall be provided with assistance in meeting their living costs,
18 such as housing and child care, while attending the program.

19 (b) In awarding grants pursuant to this section, ~~VSAC~~ **the Vermont State**
20 **College System** shall give priority to health care employer proposals based on
21 the following criteria:

1 (1) the extent to which the health care employer proposes to participate
2 financially in the program;

3 (2) the extent of the health care employer’s commitment to sustaining
4 the program financially, including providing financial support for nurse
5 preceptors, to create ongoing opportunities for educational advancement in
6 nursing;

7 (3) the ability of the health care employer’s staff to leverage nursing
8 scholarship opportunities to maximize the reach of the grant funds;

9 (4) the employer’s demonstrated ability to retain nursing students in the
10 Vermont nursing workforce;

11 (5) the employer’s geographic location, in order to ensure access to
12 pipeline and apprenticeship programs for nursing staff across Vermont; and

13 (6) the employer’s commitment to advancing the professional
14 development of individuals from marginalized communities, especially those
15 that have been historically disadvantaged in accessing educational
16 opportunities and career advancement in the health care professions.

17 (c)(1) **VSAC The Vermont State College System** shall begin awarding
18 grants under this section expeditiously in order to enable health care employer
19 staff to begin enrolling in nursing school programs that commence in the fall of
20 2022.

1 (2) On or before September 15, 2022, **VSAC the Vermont State**
2 **College System** shall provide an update to the Health Reform Oversight
3 Committee on the status of program implementation.

4 Sec. 23. 18 V.S.A. § 34 is added to read:

5 § 34. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
6 PROGRAM

7 (a) As used in this section:

8 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance
9 Corporation established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

10 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the
11 eligibility requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

12 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
13 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

14 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section
15 covering tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of
16 required books and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible
17 school.

18 (5) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received
19 from the federal government or from the State.

1 **(6) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed,**
2 **serviced, or otherwise administered by an accredited U.S. educational lender**
3 **for attendance at an eligible school.**

4 **(7) “Program” means the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan**
5 **Incentive Program created under this section.**

6 **(b)** The Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created
7 and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with
8 the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Program provides
9 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to
10 working as a nurse in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in
11 subsection (d) of this section.

12 **(c)** The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse forgivable
13 loan funds under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the
14 appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

15 **(d)** To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
16 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
17 **requirements:**

18 (1) be enrolled at an approved postsecondary education institution as
19 defined in 16 V.S.A. § 2822 a nursing program at an eligible school;

20 (2) demonstrate financial need; **(VSAC would restore this language)**

1 **(3) demonstrate academic capacity by carrying the minimum grade point**
2 **average in the individual's course of study prior to receiving the fund award**
3 **maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual is**
4 **enrolled** ~~(VSAC would restore with revisions as follows: demonstrate~~
5 ~~academic capacity by carrying a minimum grade point average, or~~
6 ~~comparable metric used by the school, in the individual's course of study~~
7 ~~prior to receiving the fund award) ; and~~

8 **(4) agree to work as a nurse in Vermont directly for a Vermont**
9 **health care provider for a minimum of one year following licensure for**
10 **each year of forgivable loan awarded.**

11 ~~have used any available gift aid;~~

12 ~~(4) have executed a contract with the Corporation committing the~~
13 ~~individual to work as a nurse in this State;~~

14 **(5) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will**
15 **reduce the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part,**
16 **pursuant to subsection (g) of this section, if the individual fails to complete**
17 **the period of service required in subsection (g) of this section subdivision**
18 **(4) of this subsection;**

19 **(5) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation**
20 **may require; and**

1 **(6) have completed the Program’s application form, the free**
2 **application for federal student aid (FAFSA), and the Vermont grant**
3 **application each academic year of enrollment in accordance with a**
4 **schedule determined by the Corporation.**

5 (e)(1) First priority for forgivable loan funds shall be given to students
6 pursuing a practical nursing certificate who will be eligible to sit for the
7 NCLEX-PN examination upon completion of the certificate.

8 (2) Second priority for forgivable loan funds shall be given to students
9 pursuing an associate’s degree in nursing who will be eligible to sit for the
10 NCLEX-RN examination upon graduation.

11 (3) Third priority for forgivable loan funds shall be given to students
12 pursuing a bachelor of science degree in nursing.

13 (4) Fourth priority shall be given to students pursuing graduate nursing
14 education.

15 **(f) In addition to the priorities established in subsection (e) of this**
16 **section:**

17 **(1) Students Vermont residents attending an approved postsecondary**
18 **educational institution eligible school in Vermont shall receive first preference**
19 **priority for forgivable loans;**

20 **(2) Vermont residents attending an eligible school in another state**
21 **shall receive second priority for forgivable loans;**

1 **(3) Nonresidents attending an eligible school in Vermont shall**
2 **receive third priority for forgivable loans; and**

3 **(4) Nonresidents attending an eligible school in another state shall**
4 **receive fourth priority for forgivable loans.**

5 **(g) For each year of service as a nurse in this State, an eligible individual**
6 **shall be entitled to a full academic year of forgivable loan benefit under the**
7 **Program. If an eligible individual fails to serve as a nurse in this State for**
8 **a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit**
9 **received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the**
10 **Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then**
11 **the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata**
12 **portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement**
13 **credit agreement or promissory note signed by the individual at the time**
14 **of entering the Program.**

15 **(h) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this**
16 **section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds**
17 **are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over**
18 **and shall be available to the Department of Health and the Vermont Student**
19 **Assistance Corporation in the following fiscal year to award additional**
20 **forgivable loans as set forth in this section.**

1 **(i) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines**
2 **necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum**
3 **forgivable loan amounts.**

4 Sec. 24. REPEAL

5 18 V.S.A. § 31 (educational assistance; incentives; nurses) is repealed.

6 Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
7 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

8 In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$100,000.00 in General Fund investment
9 for funds is appropriated to the Department of Health for forgivable loans for
10 nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive
11 Program established in Sec. 23 of this act.

12 Sec. 26. 18 V.S.A. § 35 is added to read:

13 **§ 35. VERMONT NURSING AND PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT HEALTH**
14 **CARE**

15 **PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM**

16 (a) As used in this section:

17 (1) **“Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation**
18 **established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821 “AHEC” means the Vermont Area Health**
19 **Education Centers program.**

20 (2) **“Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility**
21 **requirements for loan repayment under this section.**

1 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
2 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

3 (4) “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans
4 under this section.

5 (5) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed,
6 serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter
7 by an accredited U.S. educational lender for attendance at an eligible school.

8 (6) “Program” means the Vermont Nursing and Physician Assistant
9 Health Care Professional Loan Repayment Program created under this
10 section.

11 (b) The Vermont Nursing and Physician Assistant Health Care
12 Professional Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by
13 the Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation AHEC. The
14 Program provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who live and work
15 in this State as a nurse or physician assistant health care professional,
16 including as a nurse, physician assistant, dental hygienist, medical
17 technician, primary care provider, child psychiatrist, general surgeon,
18 emergency medical service professional, paramedic, or in another field
19 experiencing a health care workforce shortage in this State and who meet
20 the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

1 (c) The loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid
2 on behalf of the eligible individual by ~~the Corporation~~ **AHEC**, subject to the
3 appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.

4 (d) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual
5 shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

6 (1) have graduated from an eligible school where the individual ~~has,~~
7 ~~within the past five years, been~~ **was** awarded a ~~nursing degree~~ **or a degree in**
8 ~~physician assistant studies~~ **in a field experiencing a health care workforce**
9 **shortage in this State;**

10 (2) ~~had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as~~
11 ~~determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point~~
12 ~~averages from the eligible school;~~

13 (3) work ~~as a nurse or physician assistant~~ in this State **as a nurse,**
14 **physician assistant, dental hygienist, medical technician, primary care**
15 **provider, child psychiatrist, general surgeon, emergency medical service**
16 **professional, paramedic,** ~~or in another field experiencing a health care~~
17 **workforce shortage;** and

18 (3) be a resident of Vermont.

19 (e)(1) An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan
20 cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for

1 each year of service as a ~~nurse or physician assistant~~ **health care professional**
2 in this State.

3 (2) ~~The Corporation~~ **AHEC** shall award loan repayments in amounts
4 that are sufficient to attract high-quality candidates while also making a
5 meaningful increase in Vermont's health care professional workforce. **AHEC**
6 **shall prioritize awards to candidates working in fields in which Vermont**
7 **is experiencing the greatest health care workforce shortages.**

8 ~~(f) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines~~
9 ~~necessary to implement the provisions of this section.~~

10 Sec. 27. VERMONT **NURSING AND PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT HEALTH**
11 **CARE**

12 **PROFESSIONAL** LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM;

13 APPROPRIATION

14 In fiscal year 2023 the amount of ~~\$2,000,000.00~~ **\$3,000,000.00** is
15 appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health for loan
16 repayment for ~~nurses and physician assistants~~ **health care professionals** under
17 the Vermont ~~Nursing and Physician Assistant~~ **Health Care Professional** Loan
18 Repayment Program established in Sec. 26 of this act.

1 Sec. 28. 18 V.S.A. § 36 is added to read:

2 § 36. NURSE FACULTY FORGIVABLE LOAN ~~INCENTIVE AND LOAN~~
3 ~~REPAYMENT~~ PROGRAM

4 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

5 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance

6 Corporation established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

7 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
8 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan ~~or loan repayment.~~

9 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
10 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

11 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
12 tuition, ~~which may also cover~~ room, board, and the cost of required books and
13 supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

14 (5) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the
15 federal government or from the State.

16 “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans under
17 this section.

18 (6) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed,
19 serviced, or otherwise administered by the Corporation under this subchapter
20 by an accredited U.S. educational lender for attendance at an eligible school.

1 (7) “Nurse faculty member” or “member of the nurse faculty” means a
2 nurse an individual with a master’s or doctoral degree that qualifies the
3 individual to teach at a nursing school in this State.

4 (8) “Program” means the Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan and Loan
5 Repayment Program created under this section.

6 (b) Program creation. The Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan and Loan
7 Repayment Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of
8 Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides
9 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to
10 working as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this State and
11 who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The
12 Program also provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who work as
13 nurse faculty members at a nursing school in this State and who meet the
14 eligibility requirements in subsection (e) of this section.

15 (c) Payment. The forgivable loan and loan repayment benefits provided
16 under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the eligible individual by the
17 Corporation. The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under

1 **the Program on behalf of eligible individuals**, subject to the appropriation of
2 funds by the General Assembly **specifically** for this purpose.

3 (d) **Eligibility for forgivable loans**. To be eligible for a forgivable loan
4 under the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall
5 satisfy all of the following requirements:

6 (1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program that leads to a graduate
7 degree in nursing;

8 (2) continually demonstrate satisfactory academic progress by
9 maintaining the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as
10 determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point
11 averages **maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the**
12 **individual is enrolled** VSAC would restore with revisions as follows:
13 demonstrate academic capacity by carrying a minimum grade point average, or
14 comparable metric used by the school, in the individual's course of study
15 prior to receiving the fund award);

16 (3) have used any available gift aid;
17 **agree to work as member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in**
18 **Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of**
19 **forgivable loan awarded.**

1 (4) ~~have executed a contract with the Corporation committing the~~
2 ~~individual to work as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this~~
3 ~~State;~~

4 (5) have executed a ~~credit agreement or~~ promissory note that will
5 reduce the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, ~~pursuant~~
6 ~~to subsection (e) of this section~~ if the individual fails to complete the period
7 of service required in ~~subsection (e) of this section~~ ~~subdivision (3) of this~~
8 ~~subsection;~~ and

9 (6) have completed the Program's application form; ~~and~~ the free
10 application for federal student aid (FAFSA), ~~and the Vermont grant application~~
11 ~~each academic year of enrollment~~ in accordance with a schedule determined by
12 the Corporation; ~~and~~

13 (7) ~~have provided such other documentation as the Corporation~~
14 ~~may require.~~

15 (e) ~~Eligibility for loan repayment. To be eligible for loan repayment under~~
16 ~~the Program, an individual shall satisfy all of the following requirements:~~

17 (1) ~~graduated from an eligible school where the individual has, within~~
18 ~~the past five years, been awarded a graduate degree in nursing;~~

19 (2) ~~had the minimum grade point average or better or the equivalent as~~
20 ~~determined by the Corporation if the eligible school does not use grade point~~
21 ~~averages from the eligible school;~~

1 ~~(3) work as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this~~

2 ~~State; and~~

3 ~~(4) be a resident of Vermont.~~

4 ~~(f) Service commitment.~~

5 ~~(1) Forgivable loans. For each year of service as a nurse faculty~~

6 ~~member at a nursing school in this State, an eligible individual shall be entitled~~

7 ~~to a full academic year of forgivable loan benefit under the Program. If an~~

8 ~~eligible individual fails to serve as a nurse faculty member at a nursing school~~

9 ~~in this State for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable~~

10 ~~loan benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as~~

11 ~~determined by the Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department~~

12 ~~of Health, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a~~

13 ~~pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free~~

14 ~~reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering~~

15 ~~the Program.~~

16 ~~(2) Loan repayment. An eligible individual shall be entitled to an~~

17 ~~amount of loan cancellation and repayment under this section equal to one year~~

18 ~~of loans for each year of service as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing~~

19 ~~school in this State.~~

1 (f) ~~Adoption of policies, procedures, and guidelines.~~ The Corporation shall
2 adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the
3 provisions of this section, including maximum forgivable loan amounts.

4 Sec. 29. NURSE FACULTY FORGIVABLE LOAN ~~AND LOAN~~
5 ~~REPAYMENT~~

6 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

7 In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
8 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
9 Funds to the Department of Health for forgivable loans and loan repayment for
10 nurse faculty members under the Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan and Loan
11 Repayment Program established in Sec. 28 of this act.

12 Sec. 29a. 18 V.S.A. § 37 is added to read: **(NEW)**

13 § 37. NURSE FACULTY LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

14 (a) As used in this section:

15 (1) “AHEC” means the Vermont Area Health Education Centers
16 program.

17 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
18 requirements under this section for loan repayment.

19 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
20 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

1 (4) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the
2 federal government or from the State.

3 (5) “Loan repayment” means the cancellation and repayment of loans
4 under this section.

5 (6) “Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed,
6 serviced, or otherwise administered by an accredited U.S. educational lender
7 for attendance at an eligible school.

8 (7) “Nurse faculty member” or “member of the nurse faculty” means a
9 nurse with a master’s or doctoral degree that qualifies the individual to teach at
10 a nursing school in this State.

11 (8) “Program” means the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program
12 created under this section.

13 (b) The Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program is created and shall be
14 administered by the Department of Health in collaboration with AHEC. The
15 Program provides loan repayment on behalf of individuals who work as nurse
16 faculty members at a nursing school in this State and who meet the eligibility
17 requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

18 (c) The loan repayment benefits provided under the Program shall be paid
19 on behalf of the eligible individual by AHEC, subject to the appropriation of
20 funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose.

1 (d) To be eligible for loan repayment under the Program, an individual
2 shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

3 (1) graduated from an eligible school where the individual was awarded
4 a graduate degree in nursing;

5 (2) work as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this
6 State; and

7 (3) be a resident of Vermont.

8 (e) An eligible individual shall be entitled to an amount of loan cancellation
9 and repayment under this section equal to one year of loans for each year of
10 service as a member of the nurse faculty at a nursing school in this State.

11 Sec. 29b. NURSE FACULTY LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM;

12 APPROPRIATION **(NEW)**

13 In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
14 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
15 Funds to the Department of Health for loan repayment for nurse faculty
16 members under the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program established in
17 Sec. 29a of this act.

1 Sec. 29c. 18 V.S.A. § 38 is added to read:

2 § 38. VERMONT MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL FORGIVABLE

3 LOAN

4 INCENTIVE PROGRAM (NEW)

5 (a) As used in this section:

6 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
7 established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

8 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
9 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

10 (3) “Eligible school” means a school in the Vermont State College
11 System.

12 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
13 tuition, which may also cover room, board, and the cost of required books and
14 supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

15 (5) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the
16 federal government or from the State.

17 (6) ~~“Loans” means education loans guaranteed, made, financed,~~
18 ~~serviced, or otherwise administered by an accredited U.S. educational lender~~
19 ~~for attendance at an eligible school.~~

20 (7) “Program” means the Vermont Mental Health Professional
21 Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created under this section.

1 (b) The Vermont Mental Health Professional Forgivable Loan Incentive
2 Program is created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in
3 collaboration with the Corporation. The Program provides forgivable loans to
4 students enrolled in a master’s program at an eligible school who commit to
5 working as a mental health professional in this State and who meet the
6 eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

7 (c) The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall disburse forgivable
8 loan funds under the Program on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the
9 appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for this purpose.

10 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
11 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
12 requirements:

13 (1) be enrolled at a school in the Vermont this State College System in a
14 program, whether through in-person or remote instruction, that leads to a
15 master’s degree in a mental health field;

16 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
17 is enrolled VSAC would replace as follows: **demonstrate academic capacity**
18 **by carrying a minimum grade point average, or comparable metric used**
19 **by the school, in the individual’s course of study prior to receiving the**
20 **fund award**);

21 (3) have used any available gift aid;

1 (4) ~~have executed a contract with the Corporation committing the~~
2 ~~individual to work as a mental health professional in this State~~ **agree to work**
3 **as a mental health professional in Vermont for a minimum of one year**
4 **following licensure for each year of forgivable loan awarded:**

5 (5) have executed a **credit agreement or** promissory note that will
6 reduce the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, **pursuant**
7 **to subsection (e) of this section** if the individual fails to complete the period
8 of service required in ~~subsection (e) of this section~~ **subdivision (4) of this**
9 **subsection; and**

10 (6) have completed the Program’s application form, **and** the free
11 application for federal student aid (FAFSA), ~~and the Vermont grant application~~
12 ~~each academic year of enrollment~~ in accordance with a schedule determined by
13 the Corporation; **and**

14 **(7) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation**
15 **may require.**

16 (e) ~~For each year of service as a mental health professional in this State,~~
17 ~~an eligible individual shall be entitled to a full academic year of forgivable~~
18 ~~loan benefit under the Program.~~ If an eligible individual fails to serve as a
19 mental health professional in this State **in compliance with the Program** for a
20 period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit
21 received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the

1 Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the
2 individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of
3 the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory
4 note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.

5 Sec. 29d. VERMONT MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL
6 FORGIVABLE LOAN

7 INCENTIVE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION **(NEW)**

8 In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
10 Funds to the Department of Health for forgivable loans under the Vermont
11 Mental Health Professional Forgivable Loan Incentive Program established in
12 Sec. 29c of this act.

13 Sec. 29e. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED AND
14 SPECIALIZED

15 SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT **(NEW)**

16 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated to the
17 Agency of Human Services, of which \$1,000,000 is from the American Rescue
18 Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds and \$250,000.00
19 is from the General Fund, to be distributed to the designated and specialized
20 service agencies equitably based on each agency’s proportion of full-time
21 equivalent (FTE) mental health and substance use disorder treatment staff to

1 the total number of FTE mental health and substance use disorder treatment
2 staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide. The
3 designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan
4 repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of
5 high-quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals
6 available to Vermont residents in need of their services, as set forth in
7 subsection (b) of this section.

8 (b)(1) Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds
9 received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section available to its current and
10 prospective employees as set forth in subdivisions (A) and (B) of this
11 subdivision (1) on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year service obligation
12 to provide mental health services or substance use disorder treatment services,
13 or both, at a designated or specialized service agency in this State. The funds
14 may be used for the following purposes:

15 (A) loan repayment for master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level
16 direct service staff, and nurses; and

17 (B) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees to become
18 master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct service staff, and nurses.

19 (2) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to the
20 current and prospective employees of designated and specialized service

1 agencies in the form of forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the
2 employee's completion of the required service obligation.

3 (c) On or before March 1, 2023, the Agency of Human Services shall make
4 a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health
5 Care, and on Human Services; the Senate Committees on Appropriations and
6 on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated in this section.

7 Sec. 30. 18 V.S.A. § 9456 is amended to read:

8 § 9456. BUDGET REVIEW

9 (a) The Board shall conduct reviews of each hospital's proposed budget
10 based on the information provided pursuant to this subchapter and in
11 accordance with a schedule established by the Board.

12 (b) In conjunction with budget reviews, the Board shall:

13 * * *

14 (10) require each hospital to provide information on administrative
15 costs, as defined by the Board, including specific information on the amounts
16 spent on marketing and advertising costs; ~~and~~

17 (11) require each hospital to create or maintain connectivity to the
18 State's Health Information Exchange Network in accordance with the criteria
19 established by the Vermont Information Technology Leaders, Inc., pursuant to
20 subsection 9352(i) of this title, provided that the Board shall not require a

1 hospital to create a level of connectivity that the State’s Exchange is unable to
2 support;

3 (12) review the hospital’s investments in workforce development
4 initiatives, including nursing workforce pipeline collaborations with nursing
5 schools and compensation and other support for nurse preceptors; and

6 (13) consider the salaries for the hospital’s executive and clinical
7 leadership and the hospital’s salary spread, including a comparison of median
8 salaries to the medians of northern New England states.

9 * * *

10 Sec. 31. GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; FISCAL YEAR 2023
11 HOSPITAL BUDGET REVIEW; NURSING WORKFORCE
12 DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

13 For hospital fiscal year 2023, the Green Mountain Care Board may exclude
14 all or a portion of a hospital’s investments in nursing workforce development
15 initiatives from any otherwise applicable financial limitations on the hospital’s
16 budget or budget growth. Notwithstanding any provision of GMCB Rule
17 3.202, the Board may modify its hospital budget guidance for hospital fiscal
18 year 2023 as needed to comply with this section.

19 Sec. 32. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; HEALTH CARE
20 WORKFORCE DATA
21 CENTER

1 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of ~~\$1,000,000.00~~ **\$750,000.00** is
2 appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State
3 Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Office of Health Care Reform in the Agency of
4 Human Services to enable the Agency to establish and operate the statewide
5 Health Care Workforce Data Center. In order to enhance the State’s public
6 health data systems, respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and
7 improve the State’s COVID-19 mitigation and prevention efforts, the Center
8 shall collect health care workforce data, shall collaborate with the Director of
9 Health Care Reform to identify and propose solutions to address data gaps, and
10 shall share the data with the Green Mountain Care Board as appropriate to
11 inform the Board’s Health Resource Allocation Plan responsibilities pursuant
12 to 18 V.S.A. § 9405.

13 (b) The Center shall use existing statewide information to the extent
14 practicable to avoid imposing administrative burdens on health care providers
15 and to avoid duplication of efforts underway elsewhere in Vermont. The
16 Center shall expand its data collection practices over two years to include all
17 levels of the health care workforce, beginning with the highest-level licensed
18 health care professionals.

19 (c) In order to ensure the Center has access to accurate and timely health
20 care workforce data, the Center:

1 (1) shall have the cooperation of other State agencies and departments in
2 responding to the Center’s requests for information;

3 (2) may enter into data use agreements with institutions of higher
4 education and other public and private entities, to the extent permitted under
5 State and federal law; and

6 (3) may collect vacancy and turnover information from health care
7 employers.

8 (d) One permanent classified Health Care Workforce Data Center Manager
9 position is created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care
10 Reform in fiscal year 2023 to manage the Health Care Workforce Data Center
11 created pursuant to this section.

12 (e) The Agency of Human Services may include proposals for additional
13 funding or data access, or both, for the Center as part of the Agency’s fiscal
14 year 2024 budget request.

15 Sec. 33. OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; BARRIERS TO

16 MENTAL HEALTH LICENSURE; REPORT

17 The Office of Professional Regulation shall undertake a systematic review
18 of the licensing processes for mental health and substance use disorder
19 treatment professionals to identify barriers to licensure. On or before
20 January 15, 2023, the Office shall provide its findings and recommendations to
21 address any identified barriers to licensure to the House Committees on Health

1 ~~Care, on Human Services, on Commerce and Economic Development, and on~~
2 ~~Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, on~~
3 ~~Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and on Government~~
4 ~~Operations.~~

5 Sec. 34. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;

6 APPROPRIATION

7 (a) One classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce
8 Coordinator position is created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of
9 Health Care Reform in fiscal year 2023 to support the health care workforce
10 initiatives set forth in this act and in the Health Care Workforce Development
11 Strategic Plan. The Coordinator shall focus on building educational, clinical,
12 and housing partnerships and support structures to increase and improve health
13 care workforce training, recruitment, and retention.

14 (b) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the
15 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services, Office of Health Care Reform
16 for the Health Care Workforce Coordinator position, of which \$120,000.00 is
17 for personal services and \$50,000.00 is for operating expenses.

18 Sec. 35. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE

19 BOARD; SUPPLY AND DEMAND MODELING

20 On or before January 15, 2023, the Department of Labor, in collaboration
21 with the Green Mountain Care Board, shall explore and recommend to the

1 House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, and on Commerce and
2 Economic Development and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare
3 and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs a process,
4 methodology, and necessary funding amounts to establish and maintain the
5 capacity to perform health care supply and demand modeling based on
6 information in the Health Care Workforce Data Center, for use by health care
7 employers, health care educators, and policymakers.

8 Sec. 36. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL REGULATION; GREEN
9 MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS;
10 ADMINISTRATIVE COST REDUCTION; REPORT

11 (a) The Department of Financial Regulation shall explore the feasibility of
12 requiring health insurers and their prior authorization vendors to access clinical
13 data from the Vermont Health Information Exchange whenever possible to
14 support prior authorization requests in situations in which a request cannot be
15 automatically approved.

16 (b) The Department of Financial Regulation shall direct health insurers to
17 provide prior authorization information to the Department in a format required
18 by the Department in order to enable the Department to analyze opportunities
19 to align and streamline prior authorization request processes. The Department
20 shall share its findings and recommendations with the Green Mountain Care
21 Board, and the Department and the Board shall collaborate to provide

1 recommendations to the House Committee on Health Care and the Senate
2 Committees on Health and Welfare and on Finance on or before January 15,
3 2023 regarding the statutory changes necessary to align and streamline prior
4 authorization processes and requirements across health insurers.

5 Sec. 37. 33 V.S.A. § 3543 is amended to read:

6 § 3543. STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE

7 (a)(1) There is established a need-based student loan repayment assistance
8 program for the purpose of providing student loan repayment assistance to any
9 individual employed by a regulated, privately operated center-based child care
10 program or family child care home.

11 (2) An eligible individual shall:

12 (A)(i) work in a privately operated center-based child care program
13 or in a family child care home that is regulated by the Division for at least an
14 average of 30 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year; or

15 (ii) if the individual is an employee of a Vermont Head Start
16 program that operates fewer than 48 weeks per year, work a minimum of nine
17 months of the year, inclusive of any employer-approved time off;

18 (B) receive an annual salary of not more than \$50,000.00 through the
19 individual's work in regulated childcare; and

20 (C) have earned an associates or bachelor's degree with a major
21 concentration in early childhood, child and human development, elementary

1 education, special education with a birth to age eight focus, or child and family
2 services within the preceding five years.

3 (3) To participate in the program set forth in this section, an eligible
4 individual shall submit to the Department for Children and Families
5 documentation expressing the individual's intent to work in a regulated,
6 privately operated center-based child care program or family child care home
7 for at least the 12 months following the annual loan repayment award
8 notification, inclusive of any known seasonal layoffs. A participant may
9 receive up to \$4,000.00 annually in student loan repayment assistance, which
10 shall be distributed by the Department in four allotments. The Department
11 shall distribute at least one-quarter of the individual's total annual benefit after
12 the individual has completed three months of employment in accordance with
13 the program. The remainder of an individual's total annual benefit shall be
14 distributed by the Department every three months after the initial payment.

15 (b)(1) The Department shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
16 necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

17 (2) Student loan repayments shall be available pursuant to this section
18 on a first-come, first-served basis until appropriated funds are depleted.

19 (3) The Department may contract for the administration of the program.
20 Administration costs shall not be more than 10 percent of the total
21 appropriation received to implement this section.

1 (c) An individual shall not simultaneously participate in the student loan
2 repayment assistance program set forth in this section and either of the
3 scholarship programs set forth in section 3541 or 3542 of this title.

4 Sec. 38. PILOT PROGRAM; POSITIONS EMBEDDED WITHIN
5 RECOVERY CENTERS

6 (a)(1) In fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$1,290,000.00 is appropriated from
7 the General Fund to the Department for Disabilities, Aging, and Independent
8 Living's Division of Vocation Rehabilitation for the purpose of developing and
9 implementing a two-year pilot program that authorizes 15 FTE new limited-
10 service positions embedded within 12 recovery centers across the State.

11 (2) The 15 FTE limited-service positions shall be allocated as follows:

12 (A) Of the total appropriation, not more than \$540,000.00 total shall
13 may be allocated in equal amounts to fund the following 2.5 FTE at each of
14 two geographically diverse recovery centers:

15 (i) one FTE to serve as an employment counselor within the
16 Division of Vocation Rehabilitation;

17 (ii) one FTE to serve as an employment consultant within the
18 Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation; and

19 (iii) 0.5 FTE to serve as Employment Assistance Program staff
20 within the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation.

1 (B) Of the total appropriation, \$75,000.00 shall may be allocated in
2 equal amounts to fund a minimum of one-half FTE position, who shall serve as
3 an employment support counselor, at each of the 10 remaining recovery
4 centers in the State.

5 (C) Any amounts not appropriated for positions may be used to
6 provide stipends for transportation, child care, or other costs necessary to
7 enable clients to work.

8 (b) On or before January 1, 2024, the Division of Vocational
9 Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Vermont Association of Business
10 Industry and Rehabilitation and the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse
11 Programs, shall submit a report to the House Committees on Commerce and
12 Economic Development and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees
13 on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Health and
14 Welfare summarizing the effectiveness of the pilot program, including:

- 15 (1) educational attainment and achievement of program recipients;
16 (2) acquisition of a credential of value pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 546;
17 (3) number of job placements; and
18 (4) job retention rates.

1 Sec. 39. CREDENTIAL OF VALUE GOAL; PUBLIC-PRIVATE
2 PARTNERSHIP; APPROPRIATION

3 (a) Duties. In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$150,000.00 is appropriated
4 from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a
5 performance-based contract to perform the following duties, in coordination
6 and alignment with State partners, in support of the State’s goal articulated in
7 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters hold a credential
8 of value by 2025 (Goal):

9 (1) increase public awareness of the value of postsecondary education
10 and training to help persons of any age make informed decisions about the
11 value of education and training that would further their advancement in
12 educational pathways and pursuit of career goals, through targeted outreach as
13 outlined in subsection (b) of this section;

14 (2) promote a broad understanding of the public good and value in
15 achieving the State’s Goal and of actions stakeholders can take to increase
16 attainment;

17 (3) assist or coordinate with stakeholders, such as educational, business,
18 governmental, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, in activities that seek
19 to align the delivery of high-quality education and training opportunities with
20 career advancement and support the policy priorities outlined in 10 V.S.A.
21 § 546;

1 (4) collect and display publicly available, nonconfidential information
2 about postsecondary credentials available to Vermonters;

3 (5) facilitate conversations or provide information about the national
4 best practices in aligning, recognizing, measuring, tracking, and promoting
5 postsecondary credentials of value to the Vermont Department of Labor, the
6 Department of Economic Development, the State Workforce Development
7 Board, and the Agency of Education when requested;

8 (6) maintain web-based resources that provide information about
9 opportunities to obtain a postsecondary credential of value, in coordination
10 with State partners;

11 (7) support the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education
12 transition or integration of Advance Vermont’s web-based resources and
13 collected information referenced in subdivisions (4) and (6) of this subsection
14 into a State-supported system in a coordinated way; and

15 (8) meet on a quarterly basis with the Vermont Department of Labor and
16 Agency of Education about activities described in this subsection.

17 (b) Outreach. The contractor may use funds awarded by the State to:

18 (1) create and distribute public-facing communications and resources
19 related to the duties described in this section; and

20 (2) offer support to career and education counselors, employment and
21 training counselors, jobseekers and their families, and other stakeholders,

1 consistent with best practice and State policy and programs, to help them better
2 understand the postsecondary education and training landscape.

3 (c) Reports. The contractor shall provide written reports to:

4 (1) the Vermont Department of Labor and Agency of Education about
5 anticipated work and activities using a simplified reporting template jointly
6 developed by the contractor and the State entities on a quarterly basis; and

7 (2) on or before December 15, 2022, the House and Senate committees
8 of jurisdiction regarding the use of funds, activities performed, and outcomes
9 achieved pursuant to this section.

10 Sec. 40. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM;

11 APPROPRIATION

12 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from
13 the General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to
14 continue funding through the pilot project Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn
15 Program, which supports workforce development goals through creating
16 meaningful paid service and learning opportunities for young adults, and which
17 has a goal to serve 1,700 participants and complete 13,000 service weeks over
18 the next three years, through the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Vermont
19 Audubon, Vermont Works for Women, and Resource VT.

1 **(b) The Department shall provide the legislative committees of jurisdiction**
2 **an interim Program reports on or before January 15, 2023 and 2024 and a final**
3 **Program report on or before January 15, 2025.**

4 Sec. 41. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; FINDINGS

5 The General Assembly finds:

6 (1) Adult education and literacy services are a key piece of the
7 workforce development system and serve as the entryway into career readiness
8 and workforce development for tens of thousands of our most vulnerable
9 Vermonters, those with low literacy, under-education, or those simply in need
10 of increased skills so that they can succeed.

11 (2) 36,000 adults in Vermont do not have a high school credential, and
12 tens of thousands more lack the skills to matriculate into and be successful in
13 college, in career training programs, or both. Adult education and literacy
14 providers are the first stop on the path to the transformative opportunities that
15 Vermont is offering for these individuals.

16 (3) Adult education and literacy services help people build the assets
17 they need to move out of poverty successfully, as well as the confidence to
18 continue to move toward success throughout their lives. Students are supported
19 to identify concrete goals and then break those goals down into steps. Students
20 set goals in the domains of:

21 (A) family and life;

1 (B) academics; and

2 (C) career and college readiness.

3 Sec. 42. FINDINGS; FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

4 The General Assembly finds for the purposes of this section and Secs. 43 to
5 45 of this act:

6 (1) Private and public forestlands:

7 (A) constitute unique and irreplaceable resources, benefits, and
8 values of statewide importance;

9 (B) contribute to the protection and conservation of wildlife habitat,
10 air, water, and soil resources of the State;

11 (C) mitigate the effects of climate change; and

12 (D) benefit the general health and welfare of the persons of the State.

13 (2) The forest products sector, including maple sap collection:

14 (A) is a major contributor to and is valuable to the State's economy
15 by providing nearly 14,000 jobs for Vermonters, generating \$2.1 billion in
16 annual sales, and supporting \$30.8 million in additional economic activity
17 from trail uses and seasonal tourism;

18 (B) is essential to the manufacture of forest products that are used
19 and enjoyed by the persons of the State; and

20 (C) benefits the general welfare of the persons of the State.

1 (3) Private and public forestlands are critical for and contribute
2 significantly to the State’s outdoor recreation and tourism economies.

3 (4) Eighty percent of Vermont’s forestland is held in private ownership,
4 of which 56 percent of private lands are enrolled in the forestland category of
5 Vermont’s Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA). UVA is Vermont’s most
6 important conservation program and contains the largest foundation of supply
7 to support a vibrant forest-based rural economy.

8 (5) Economic realities and demand pressures for urban, commercial, and
9 residential land uses throughout the State continue to challenge forest
10 landowners trying to maintain intact forests. Forest fragmentation can
11 adversely affect the natural environment and viable forest management.
12 Addressing the economic and social needs of the forest products sector is
13 paramount to keeping forests intact, viable, and healthy.

14 (6) The encouragement, development, improvement, and preservation of
15 forestry operations will result in extant, intact, and functioning forests that will
16 provide a general benefit to the health and welfare of the persons of the State
17 and the State’s economy.

18 (7) To strengthen, promote, and protect the Vermont forest products
19 sector, the State should establish the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
20 Roadmap.

1 Sec. 43. 10 V.S.A. chapter 82 is added to read:

2 CHAPTER 82. VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

3 § 2531. VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

4 (a) Creation. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall
5 create the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap to strengthen, modernize,
6 promote, and protect the forest products sector in Vermont. The
7 Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation may contract with a qualified
8 contractor for the creation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap.
9 During the contract proposal process, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and
10 Recreation shall seek a proposal to complete the Vermont Forest Future
11 Strategic Roadmap from the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

12 (b) Intended outcomes. The intended outcomes of the Vermont Forest
13 Future Strategic Roadmap are to:

14 (1) increase sustainable economic development and jobs in Vermont's
15 forest economy;

16 (2) promote ways to expand the workforce and strengthen forest product
17 enterprises in order to strengthen, modernize, promote, and protect the
18 Vermont forest economy into the future;

19 (3) promote the importance of healthy, resilient, and sustainably
20 managed working forests that provide a diverse array of high-quality products
21 now and in the future; and

1 (4) identify actionable strategies designed to strengthen, modernize,
2 promote, and protect the forest products sector in Vermont, including
3 opportunities for new product development, opening new markets for Vermont
4 forest products, adopting modern manufacturing processes, and utilizing new
5 ways to market Vermont forest products.

6 (c) Strategic Roadmap content. In developing the Vermont Forest Future
7 Strategic Roadmap, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or the
8 relevant contractor shall:

9 (1) review all existing data, plans, and industry-level research completed
10 over the past 10 years, including the Working Lands Enterprise Fund’s Forest
11 Sector Systems Analysis, and identify any recommendations in those reports in
12 order to build upon previous efforts;

13 (2) identify infrastructure investment and funding to support and
14 promote Vermont forest products enterprises;

15 (3) identify regulatory barriers and propose policy recommendations to
16 support and strengthen the Vermont forest economy;

17 (4) identify opportunities for all State agencies to engage with and
18 enhance the Vermont forest products sector, including the Department of
19 Buildings and General Services, the Agency of Commerce and Community
20 Development, the Department of Tourism and Marketing, the Agency of
21 Education, the Agency of Transportation, the Department of Public Service,

1 the Agency of Natural Resources, the Department of Financial Regulation, and
2 the Department of Labor;

3 (5) develop recommendations to support education and training of the
4 current and future workforce of the Vermont forest products sector;

5 (6) propose alternatives for the modernization of transportation and
6 regulation of Vermont forest products enterprises, including modernization of
7 local and State permits;

8 (7) identify methods or programs that Vermont forest enterprises can
9 utilize to access business assistance services;

10 (8) recommend how to maintain access by Vermont forest products
11 enterprises to forestland and how to maintain the stewardship and conservation
12 of Vermont forests as a whole;

13 (9) propose methods to enhance market development and manufacturing
14 by Vermont forest products enterprises, including value chain coordination and
15 regional partnerships;

16 (10) recommend consumer education and marketing initiatives; and

17 (11) recommend how to clarify the roles of various public entities and
18 nongovernmental organizations that provide certain services to the forestry
19 sector and to ensure coordination and alignment of those functions in order to
20 advance and maximize the strength of the forest products industry.

21 (d) Process for development of Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap.

1 (1) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant
2 contractor shall develop the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap and all
3 subsequent revisions through the use of a public stakeholder process that
4 includes and invites participation by interested parties representing all users of
5 Vermont’s forests, including representatives of forest products enterprises,
6 State agencies, investors, forestland owners, recreational interests, loggers,
7 foresters, truckers, sawmills, firewood processors, wood products
8 manufacturers, education representatives, and others.

9 (2) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, in collaboration
10 with forest products sector stakeholders, shall review the Strategic Roadmap
11 periodically and shall update the Strategic Roadmap at least every 10 years.

12 (e) Advisory panel; administration.

13 (1) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant
14 contractor shall convene a Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap advisory
15 panel to review and counsel in the development and implementation of the
16 Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap. The advisory panel shall include
17 representatives of forest products enterprises, State agencies, investors,
18 forestland owners, foresters, loggers, truckers, wood products manufacturers,
19 recreational specialists, education representatives, trade organizations, and
20 other partners as deemed appropriate. The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and
21 Recreation shall select representatives to the advisory panel.

1 (2) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant
2 contractor may seek grants or other means of assistance to support the
3 development and implementation of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
4 Roadmap.

5 Sec. 44. IMPLEMENTATION

6 (a) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or relevant
7 contractor shall submit to the General Assembly:

8 (1) draft recommendations for the Vermont Forest Future Strategic
9 Roadmap on or before July 1, 2023; and

10 (2) a final report and recommendations for the Vermont Forest Future
11 Strategic Roadmap on or before January 1, 2024.

12 (b) Any recommendation submitted under this section shall include
13 recommended appropriations sufficient to implement the recommendation or
14 the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap as a whole.

15 Sec. 45. APPROPRIATIONS

16 In addition to any other funds appropriated to the Department of Forests,
17 Parks and Recreation, in fiscal year 2023 the amount of \$250,000.00 is
18 appropriated from the General Fund to the Department to enter a two-year
19 contract in fiscal year 2023 for the purpose of contracting for the development
20 of the Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap required by 10 V.S.A.
21 § 2531.

1 ~~Sec. 46. ECONOMIC RECOVERY GRANT PROGRAM; REVERSION~~

2 ~~In fiscal year 2022, of the amounts appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves~~

3 ~~No. 74, Sec. G. 300(a)(13), from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)~~

4 ~~Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Agency of Commerce and~~

5 ~~Community Development for the Economic Recovery Grant Program:~~

6 ~~(1) \$8,000,000.00 shall revert to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)~~

7 ~~Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds; and~~

8 ~~(2) any additional amounts remaining in the Program at the close of~~

9 ~~fiscal year 2022 shall revert to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)~~

10 ~~Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds and the Agency shall report such~~

11 ~~amount to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its July 2022 meeting.~~

12 Sec. 47. EFFECTIVE DATES

13 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022, except that:

14 (1) Sec. 13 (Secondary Student Industry Recognized Credential Pilot
15 Project) and Sec. 46 (Economic Recovery Grant Program funding) shall take
16 effect on passage.

17 (2) Sec. 30 (18 V.S.A. § 9456) shall take effect on January 1, 2023 and
18 shall apply to hospital fiscal years 2024 and after.

19

20

21

1

2

3

4 (Committee vote: _____)

5

6

Senator _____

7

FOR THE COMMITTEE