

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 106  
3 entitled “An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through  
4 community schools” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and  
5 recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended by  
6 striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the  
7 following:

8 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

9 This act shall be called the “Community Schools Act.”

10 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

11 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

12 (1) Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to  
13 achieve their dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every child  
14 deserves a public school that fully delivers on that promise.

15 (2) According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than  
16 half of the nation’s schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning  
17 they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, a percentage that has risen steadily  
18 in recent decades. According to the Vermont Agency of Education, an average  
19 of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions during the 2019–2020  
20 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. As a result, some

1 schoolchildren face more challenges than others in succeeding in school and in  
2 life.

3 (3) Community schools facilitate the coordination of comprehensive  
4 programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of  
5 students and families, such as substance misuse, lack of stable housing,  
6 inadequate medical and dental care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence,  
7 so students can do their best.

8 (4) According to research reports from the Learning Policy Institute, the  
9 four key pillars of the community schools approach, which are integrated  
10 student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,  
11 active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and  
12 practices, promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools as  
13 well as address out-of-school barriers to learning.

14 (5) This research also shows that community school interventions can  
15 result in improvements in a variety of student outcomes, including attendance,  
16 academic achievement (including reducing racial and economic achievement  
17 gaps), and high school graduation rates, and can meet the Every Student  
18 Succeeds Act standard of “evidence-based” approaches to support schools  
19 identified for comprehensive and targeted support and intervention.

20 (6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on  
21 investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community

1 coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school  
2 (Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study;  
3 APEX and Community School Partnership; 2019). Every dollar invested in  
4 programs and support (including medical, dental, and social services;  
5 afterschool and summer enrichment; parent engagement; and early childhood  
6 services) can yield up to \$15.00 in return (Community Schools as an Effective  
7 School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence; Anna Maier, Julia  
8 Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and Livia Lam; 2017).

9 (7) According to the Learning Policy Institute, “establishing community  
10 schools” is one of 10 recommended strategies for restarting and rethinking the  
11 role of public education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community  
12 schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed,  
13 well-coordinated supports and services that help students and families with  
14 increasingly complex needs.

15 (8) Community schools have been established in many states and  
16 settings, from New York City to Chicago and Los Angeles. But the approach  
17 has also been successful in rural communities. In McDowell County, West  
18 Virginia (population 22,000), community schools are part of a public-private  
19 partnership, a collaboration between state government, nonprofit agencies,  
20 businesses, and philanthropic foundations, that aims to “make educational  
21 improvement the route to a brighter economic future.” The national nonprofit

1 Rural School and Community Trust is an active advocate for expanding this  
2 model in rural areas, calling the relationship between good schools and  
3 thriving communities “crucial.” In Vermont, a growing number of schools are  
4 implementing or exploring the model, from Molly Stark Elementary in  
5 Bennington, which offers school-based health services, extended hours,  
6 summer school, and family learning activities, to the school-based health  
7 center in Winooski.

8 (9) Recognizing that literacy proficiency is a foundational learning skill,  
9 community schools can advance the State goal of improving literacy for all  
10 students in the State. Achieving this goal will require a multiyear and  
11 multidimensional effort requiring continued focus by the General Assembly,  
12 the Administration, and school leaders, and community schools are an  
13 important component of that effort.

14 (b) Purpose. This act provides funding for the implementation of  
15 community school programs that provide students with equitable access to a  
16 high-quality education and creates the Task Force on Universal School Lunch.

17 **Sec. 3. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS; FUNDING**

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

19 (1) “Community school coordinator” means a person who:

1           (A) is a full-time or part-time staff member serving in an eligible  
2           school or in a school district or supervisory union with an eligible school and  
3           appointed in accordance with Vermont law; and

4           (B) is responsible for the identification, implementation, and  
5           coordination of a community school program, subject to the operational and  
6           reporting structure of the community school coordinator’s employer.

7           (2) “Community school program” means a program offered at a public  
8           elementary or secondary school that includes all four of the following:

9           (A) integrated student supports, which address out-of-school barriers  
10          to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and  
11          providers, coordinated by a community school coordinator, which may include  
12          access to services such as medical, dental, vision care, and mental health  
13          services, or access to counselors to assist with housing, transportation,  
14          nutrition, immigration, or criminal justice issues;

15          (B) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, which  
16          may include before-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programs, that  
17          provide additional academic instruction, individualized academic support,  
18          enrichment activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize real-world  
19          learning and community problem-solving and that may include art, music,  
20          drama, creative writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science,

1 tutoring and homework help, and recreational programs that enhance and are  
2 consistent with the school’s curriculum;

3 (C) active family and community engagement, which brings  
4 students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s  
5 education and makes the school a community hub, providing adults with a  
6 facility to access educational opportunities they want, which shall include  
7 access to evidence-based literacy instruction and may include coordinating  
8 services with outside providers to offer English as a second language classes,  
9 green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, financial literacy,  
10 career counseling, job skills training, services for substance misuse, and other  
11 programs that bring community members into the building for meetings or  
12 events; and

13 (D) collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of  
14 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies  
15 that shall, at a minimum, leverage the multitiered system of supports and  
16 include a community school coordinator and a representative of families in the  
17 community, and may include school, school district, and other leadership or  
18 governance teams; teacher learning communities; and other staff to manage the  
19 multiple, complex, joint work of school and community organizations.

20 (3) “Eligible recipient” means either a school district with an eligible  
21 school or supervisory union with an eligible school.

1           (4) “Eligible school” means a public elementary or secondary school  
2           that:

3                   (A) has a student body where at least 40 percent of students are  
4                   eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National  
5                   School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.; or

6                   (B) has been identified for comprehensive or equity support and  
7                   intervention under Section 1111(c)(4)(D) of the Elementary and Secondary  
8                   Education Act of 1965 or otherwise identified by the State as in need of  
9                   additional support.

10           (5) “Site-based leadership team” means an interdisciplinary, school-  
11           based leadership team that includes the school principal, the community school  
12           coordinator, teachers, other school employees, families, community partners,  
13           nonprofit organizations, unions, and neighboring community residents that  
14           guides collaborative planning, implementation, and oversight of the  
15           community school program.

16           (b) Funding authorization. The Secretary of Education is authorized to  
17           provide annual funding of up to \$110,000.00 a year for a period of three years  
18           for each recipient of the funding to use the funding as required under  
19           subsection (d) of this section.

20           (c) Funding administration.

1           (1) The Secretary of Education, in collaboration with the Secretary of  
2 Human Services, shall determine which eligible recipient shall receive funding  
3 and the amount of funding, and the Secretary of Education shall provide the  
4 funding on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 to  
5 recipients. The Secretary may deny or reduce second- and third-year funding  
6 if the Secretary finds that the recipient has made insufficient progress towards  
7 developing and implementing a community school program. In determining  
8 which eligible recipients shall receive funding, the Secretaries of Education  
9 and Human Services shall take into account relative need, based on the extent  
10 to which community school program services are needed and the extent to  
11 which the eligible recipient seeks to offer them.

12           (2) The Agency of Education shall inform eligible recipients of the  
13 availability of funding under this act and shall target those eligible recipients  
14 most in need of this funding. The Agency of Education shall also advise  
15 eligible recipients of other sources of funding that may be available to advance  
16 the purpose of this act.

17           (d) Use of funding.

18           (1) A recipient of funding under this act shall use the funding to:

19           (A) if a needs and assets assessment has not been conducted within  
20 the prior three years that substantially conforms with the requirements in this



1 subdivision, then, in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, conduct  
2 a needs and assets assessment that includes:

3 (i) where available, and where applicable, student demographic,  
4 academic achievement, and school climate data, disaggregated by major  
5 demographic groups, including race, ethnicity, English language proficiency,  
6 students with individualized education plans, and students eligible for free or  
7 reduced-price lunch status;

8 (ii) access to and need for integrated student supports;

9 (iii) access to and need for expanded and enriched learning time  
10 and opportunities;

11 (iv) school funding information, including federal, State, local,  
12 and private education funding and per-pupil spending, based on actual salaries  
13 of personnel assigned to the eligible school;

14 (v) information on the number, qualifications, and stability of  
15 school staff, including the number and percentage of fully certified teachers  
16 and rates of teacher turnover; and

17 (vi) active family and community engagement information,  
18 including:

19 (I) family and community needs based on surveys, information  
20 from public meetings, or information gathered by other means;

1                   (II) measures of family and community engagement in the  
2 eligible schools, including volunteering in schools, attendance at back-to-  
3 school nights, and parent-teacher conferences;

4                   (III) efforts to provide culturally and linguistically relevant  
5 communication between schools and families; and

6                   (IV) access to and need for family and community engagement  
7 activities;

8                   (B) hire a community school coordinator to, in collaboration with the  
9 site-based leadership team, develop and implement a community school  
10 program or designate a community school coordinator from existing personnel  
11 and, in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, augment work  
12 already being performed to develop and implement a community school  
13 program;

14                   (C) in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, develop and  
15 implement a plan to improve literacy outcomes, and objectively assess those  
16 outcomes; and

17                   (D) if the recipient has not fully implemented positive behavioral  
18 integrated supports under 16 V.S.A. § 2902, provide professional development  
19 to staff on positive behavioral integrated supports and implement those  
20 supports.

1           (2) If a needs and assets assessment has not been conducted under  
2 subdivision (1)(A) of this subsection within the prior three years, the first year  
3 of funding shall be used to conduct the needs and assets assessment of the  
4 school to determine what is necessary to develop a community school program  
5 and an action plan to implement the community school program. During the  
6 second and third years of the funding, the community school coordinator shall,  
7 in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, oversee the  
8 implementation of the community school program.

9           (e) Evaluation.

10           (1) At the end of each year of funding, each recipient shall undergo an  
11 evaluation designed by the Agency of Education.

12           (2) On or before each of December 15, 2022 and 2024, the Agency of  
13 Education shall report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the  
14 impact of the funding under this act. The report shall be made publicly  
15 available on the Agency of Education’s website.

16       Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

17           (a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$3,399,000.00 of the amount  
18 allocated to the Agency of Education from the American Rescue Plan Act of  
19 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(1), 2021, Pub. L. No. 117-2 for the funding  
20 under this act on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under  
21 Sec. 3 of this act.

1        (b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

2            (1) not more than one percent of the funds appropriated under  
3        subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for  
4        informational and technical assistance, such as the availability and use of  
5        funding for eligible recipients as defined under Sec. 3 of this act; and

6            (2) not more than two percent of the funds appropriated under  
7        subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for  
8        the evaluations required under Sec. 3 of this act.

9        **Sec. 5. TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSAL SCHOOL LUNCH; REPORT**

10        (a) Creation. There is created the Task Force on Universal School Lunch.  
11        The Task Force shall make recommendations on how, not later than the 2026–  
12        2027 school year, to achieve the goal of providing universal school lunch for  
13        all public school students at no cost to the students or their families.

14        (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the:

15            (1) Secretary of Education or designee;

16            (2) Secretary of Human Services or designee; and

17            (3) Secretary of Agriculture or designee.

18        (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall make recommendations on  
19        how, not later than the 2026–2027 school year, to achieve the goal of providing  
20        universal school lunch for all public school students at no cost to the students  
21        or their families and shall perform the following tasks:

- 1           (1) recommend funding sources for universal school lunch;  
2           (2) recommend what data should be collected by local education  
3 agencies, school districts, and schools to qualify for federal funds based on  
4 student poverty, the means by which the data should be collected, the  
5 frequency of collection, and how this data should be reported to the Agency of  
6 Education and the frequency of this reporting;  
7           (3) consider how other states offer and fund universal school meals at no  
8 cost to students or their families; and  
9           (4) meet with Vermont’s federal delegation to discuss what changes  
10 could be made to federal law and regulations to more readily facilitate  
11 universal school meals.  
12           (d) Collaboration. In performing its duties under this section, the Task  
13 Force shall collaborate with Hunger Free Vermont, the School Nutrition  
14 Association of Vermont, the Vermont Superintendents Association, the  
15 Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Council of Special  
16 Education Administrators, the Vermont Principals’ Association, and the  
17 Vermont-National Education Association.  
18           (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2022, the Task Force shall submit a  
19 written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education and on  
20 Appropriations, the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, and the

1 Senate Committee on Agriculture with its findings and any recommendations  
2 for legislative action.

3 (f) Meetings.

4 (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Task  
5 Force to occur on or before October 10, 2021.

6 (2) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the  
7 first meeting.

8 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

9 (4) The Task Force shall meet not more than eight times.

10 (5) The Task Force shall expire on January 16, 2022.

11 (g) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,  
12 and legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

13 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

14 This act shall take effect on passage.

15  
16  
17 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

18 \_\_\_\_\_

19 Senator \_\_\_\_\_

20 FOR THE COMMITTEE