

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 * * * Short Title * * *

9 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

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

11 * * * Findings and Purpose * * *

12 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

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

14 (1) Every child should be provided with an equitable education, as
15 defined by the Agency of Education as access to the resources, opportunities,
16 and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education,
17 whatever their race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion,
18 language, disability, family background, or family income may be. Every
19 child should be able to grow up with the opportunity to achieve their dreams
20 and contribute to the well-being of society. Our public schools must be
21 designed and equipped to fully deliver on that promise.

1 (2) According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than
2 half of the nation’s schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning
3 they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, a percentage that has risen steadily
4 in recent decades. According to the Vermont Agency of Education, an average
5 of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions during the 2019–2020
6 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. As a result, some
7 schoolchildren face more challenges than others in succeeding in school and in
8 life. Recognizing that students need fresh and nutritional foods to enable them
9 to focus on their education and that many students come to school hungry,
10 providing universal school meals offered at no cost to students or their families
11 advances the goals that community school programs seek to achieve.

12 (3) Community schools facilitate the coordination of comprehensive
13 programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of
14 students and families and build on the assets they bring to their schools and
15 communities. Community schools combine challenging and culturally
16 inclusive learning opportunities with the academic and social supports every
17 student needs to reach their potential.

18 (4) According to research reports from the Learning Policy Institute, the
19 four key pillars of the community schools approach, which are integrated
20 student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,
21 active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and

1 practices, promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools as
2 well as address out-of-school barriers to learning. Research additionally
3 supports the necessity of safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments
4 to reinforce student success and well-being. These elements do not function
5 independently, but are instead part of a unified and interconnected approach.

6 (5) This research also shows that community school interventions can
7 result in improvements in a variety of student and family outcomes, including
8 attendance, academic achievement, reducing systemic racial and economic
9 injustices and inequities, and high school graduation rates, and can meet the
10 Every Student Succeeds Act standard of “evidence-based” approaches to
11 support schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and
12 intervention.

13 (6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on
14 investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community
15 coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school
16 (Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study;
17 APEX and Community School Partnership; 2019). Every dollar invested in
18 programs and support (including medical, dental, and social services;
19 afterschool and summer enrichment; parent engagement; and early childhood
20 services) can yield up to \$15.00 in return (Community Schools as an Effective

1 School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence; Anna Maier, Julia
2 Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and Livia Lam; 2017).

3 (7) According to the Learning Policy Institute, “establishing community
4 schools” is one of 10 recommended strategies for restarting and rethinking the
5 role of public education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community
6 schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed,
7 well-coordinated supports and services that help students and families with
8 increasingly complex needs. These schools, at their core, are about investing
9 in children, through quality teaching; challenging, engaging, and culturally
10 responsive curricula; wrap around supports; safe, just, and equitable school
11 climate; strong ties to family and community; and a clear focus on student
12 achievement and well-being.

13 (8) Community schools are important centers for building community
14 connection and resilience. When learning extends beyond the walls of the
15 school through active engagement with community partners as with place-
16 based learning, relationships expand and deepen, community strengths are
17 highlighted, and opportunities for building vitality surface through shared
18 learning.

19 (9) Community schools have been established in many states and
20 settings, from New York City to Chicago and Los Angeles. But the approach
21 has also been successful in rural communities. In McDowell County, West

1 Virginia (population 22,000), community schools are part of a public-private
2 partnership, a collaboration between state government, nonprofit agencies,
3 businesses, and philanthropic foundations, that aims to “make educational
4 improvement the route to a brighter economic future.” The national nonprofit
5 Rural School and Community Trust is an active advocate for expanding this
6 model in rural areas, calling the relationship between good schools and
7 thriving communities “crucial.” In Vermont, a growing number of schools are
8 implementing or exploring the model, from Molly Stark Elementary in
9 Bennington, which offers school-based health services, extended hours,
10 summer school, and family learning activities, to the school-based health
11 center in Winooski.

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

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

1 educational strategies like universal design for learning, recognition and
2 respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, and practices that focus on building
3 and supporting relationships such as restorative practices.

4 (B) Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, which
5 may include before-school, afterschool, weekend, summer programs, and
6 during the school day, that provide additional academic instruction,
7 individualized academic support, enrichment activities, and learning
8 opportunities that emphasize real-world learning and community problem-
9 solving and that may include art, music, drama, creative writing, hands-on
10 experience with engineering or science, tutoring and homework help, and
11 recreational programs that enhance and are consistent with the school’s
12 curriculum.

13 (C) Active family and community engagement, which brings
14 students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s
15 education and makes the school a community hub, where all students and their
16 families feel a sense of belonging and engagement. This shall include broad
17 student and community participation, with a diversity of income, race, gender,
18 newcomer status, language, and ability represented in the design,
19 implementation, and evaluation of all activities, that is embraced by the leaders
20 and decision-makers in schools and communities. This also provides adults
21 with a facility to access educational opportunities they want, which shall

1 include access to evidence-based literacy instruction and may include
2 coordinating services with outside providers to offer English as a second
3 language classes, green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art,
4 financial literacy, career counseling, job skills training, services for substance
5 misuse, and other programs that bring community members into the building
6 for meetings or events.

7 (D) Collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of
8 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies
9 that shall, at a minimum, leverage the multitiered system of supports and
10 include a community school coordinator and an integrated school and
11 community leadership team that include youth and family representatives, and
12 may include other leadership or governance teams; teacher learning
13 communities; and other staff to manage the multiple, complex, joint work of
14 school and community organizations.

15 (E) Safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.

16 (3) “Eligible recipient” means:

17 (A) a school district with one or more eligible schools;

18 (B) a supervisory union with one or more eligible schools;

19 (C) two or more school districts, each with one or more eligible

20 schools that seek to work collaboratively to provide community school

21 programs; or

1 (D) two or more supervisory unions, each with one or more eligible
2 schools that seek to work collaboratively to provide community school
3 programs.

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

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

9 (B) has been identified for comprehensive or equity support and
10 intervention under Section 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education
11 Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-10, as amended, or otherwise identified by the State as
12 in need of additional support.

13 (5) “Site-based leadership team” means an interdisciplinary, school-
14 based leadership team that may include the school principal, the community
15 school coordinator, teachers, other school employees, students, families,
16 community partners, nonprofit organizations, unions, and neighboring
17 community residents that supports collaborative planning, implementation, and
18 oversight of community school programs by the community school
19 coordinator.

1 **(b) Funding authorization. The Secretary of Education is authorized to**
2 **provide annual funding for a period of three years to an eligible recipient to use**
3 **as required under subsection (d) of this section.**

4 (c) Funding administration.

5 (1) Subject to subdivision (2) of this subsection, the Secretary of
6 Education shall determine, using the Agency of Education’s equity lens tool,
7 which eligible recipients shall receive funding and the amount of funding, and
8 the Secretary shall provide the funding on or before September 1 of each of
9 2021, 2022, and 2023 to recipients. The Secretary may deny or reduce second-
10 and third-year funding if the Secretary finds that the recipient has made
11 insufficient progress towards developing and implementing community school
12 programs. In determining which eligible recipients shall receive funding, the
13 Secretary shall take into account relative need, based on the extent to which
14 community school program services are needed and the extent to which the
15 eligible recipient seeks to offer them.

16 (2) In determining which eligible recipients shall receive funding and
17 the amount of funding and to advance the principles for Vermont’s trauma-
18 informed system of care under 33 V.S.A. § 3401, the Secretary of Education
19 shall collaborate with the Director of Trauma Prevention and Resilience
20 Development and the Vermont Child and Family Trauma Work Group.

1 (3) The Agency of Education shall inform all eligible recipients of the
2 availability of funding under this act and, for those eligible recipients most in
3 need of this funding, shall educate these eligible recipients on community
4 school programs and their benefits. The Agency of Education shall also advise
5 all eligible recipients of other sources of funding that may be available to
6 advance the purpose of this act.

7 (d) Use of funding.

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

9 (A) if a needs and assets assessment has not been conducted within
10 the prior three years that substantially conforms with the requirements in this
11 subdivision, then, in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, conduct
12 a needs and assets assessment that includes:

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

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

19 (iii) access to and need for expanded and enriched learning time
20 and opportunities;

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

4 (v) information on the number, qualifications, and stability of
5 school staff, including the number and percentage of fully certified teachers
6 and rates of teacher turnover; and

7 (vi) active family and community engagement information,
8 including:

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

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

14 (III) efforts to provide culturally and linguistically relevant
15 communication between schools and families; and

16 (IV) access to and need for family and community engagement
17 activities;

18 (B) hire a community school coordinator to, in collaboration with the
19 site-based leadership team, develop and implement community school
20 programs or designate a community school coordinator from existing
21 personnel and, in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, augment

1 work already being performed to develop and implement community school
2 programs; and

3 (C) if the recipient has not fully implemented positive behavioral
4 integrated supports under 16 V.S.A. § 2902, provide professional development
5 to staff on positive behavioral integrated supports and implement those
6 supports.

7 (2) A recipient of funding under this act may use the funding to, in
8 collaboration with the site-based leadership team, develop and implement a
9 plan to improve literacy outcomes and objectively assess those outcomes.

10 (3) If a needs and assets assessment has not been conducted under
11 subdivision (1)(A) of this subsection within the prior three years, the first year
12 of funding shall be used to conduct the needs and assets assessment of the
13 school to determine what is necessary to develop community school programs
14 and an action plan to implement community school programs. During the
15 second and third years of the funding, the community school coordinator shall,
16 in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, oversee the
17 implementation of community school programs.

18 (e) Evaluation.

19 (1) At the end of each year of funding, each recipient shall undergo an
20 evaluation designed by the Agency of Education using its equity lens tool.

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

5 (f) Ability to operate as a community school. Any school district or school,
6 regardless of whether it receives a grant award under this act, may function as
7 a community school as defined in this section.

8 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

9 (a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$3,399,000.00 of the amount
10 allocated to the Agency of Education from the American Rescue Plan Act of
11 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(1), 2021, Pub. L. No. 117-2 for the funding
12 under this act on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under
13 Sec. 3 of this act.

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

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

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

1 ~~(2) On or before January 31, 2021 and annually thereafter, the Agency~~
2 ~~of Education shall submit to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on~~
3 ~~Education and the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on~~
4 ~~Education in an aggregated form the information received from school boards~~
5 ~~regarding the percentage of locally produced foods that are purchased as part~~
6 ~~of a school lunch, breakfast, or summer meals program. The provisions of~~
7 ~~2 V.S.A. § 20(d) regarding expiration of required reports shall not apply to the~~
8 ~~report required by this subdivision. [Repealed.]~~

9 Sec. 7. 16 V.S.A. § 1264a is added to read:

10 § 1264a. LOCALLY PRODUCED FOODS

11 (a) It is a goal of the State that by the year 2023, at least 20 percent of all
12 foods purchased by supervisory unions and supervisory districts, together
13 referred to in this section as “supervisory unions,” be locally produced foods.
14 School boards have the discretion to define what foods are included within the
15 definition of “locally produced foods” for the purposes of this subsection and
16 subsection (b) of this section.

17 (b) On or before December 31, 2021 and annually thereafter, a school
18 board operating a school lunch, breakfast, or summer meals program shall
19 report to the Agency of Education an estimate of the percentage of the cost of
20 all foods purchased by the school board for those programs that were locally
21 produced foods during the one-year period ending on June 30 of that year.

1 (c)(1) Beginning with the 2021–22 school year and thereafter, supervisory
2 unions shall be eligible for a local foods incentive grant (grant) from funds
3 appropriated to the Agency of Education for this purpose.

4 (2) A supervisory union may apply for the grant if it has:

5 (A) developed a locally produced foods purchasing plan that
6 describes the supervisory union’s goals for purchasing locally produced foods
7 and its plan to achieve those goals;

8 (B) designated an individual as the food coordinator for locally
9 produced foods who shall be responsible for implementing the locally
10 produced foods purchasing plan;

11 (C) developed a process for tracking the purchase of locally produced
12 foods; and

13 (D) complied with the reporting requirement under subsection (b) of
14 this section.

15 (3) A supervisory union that has satisfied the conditions under
16 subdivision (2) of this subsection may, on or before January 15, 2022 or on or
17 before January 15 of any year thereafter, apply to the Agency for the grant by
18 submitting a certification, signed by the business manager for the supervisory
19 union, that the supervisory union satisfies the conditions under subdivision (2)
20 of this subsection.

1 (4) If a supervisory union is eligible for a grant under subdivision (3) of
2 this subsection, then the Agency shall make the grant payment, subject to
3 appropriation, on or before the following March 31 after submission of the
4 supervisory union’s application, which is due on or before January 15 of that
5 year, which shall be equal to \$0.15 per reimbursable school lunch served by
6 the supervisory union in the prior school year through the National School
7 Lunch Program. A supervisory union may apply for this grant and receive this
8 grant funding only once.

9 (5)(A) A supervisory union that has received a grant under
10 subdivision (4) of this subsection (c) may, on or before January 15, 2023 or on
11 or before January 15 of any year thereafter, apply for a further grant by
12 submitting to the Agency of Education information that demonstrates that at
13 least 15 percent of the cost of all foods purchased or grown, raised, or
14 produced by the supervisory union during the one-year period ending on
15 June 30 of the previous year were local to Vermont as defined in 9 V.S.A.
16 § 2465a(b), excluding:

17 (i) foods purchased or grown, raised, or produced by the
18 supervisory union that were used to provide catering services for which the
19 supervisory union received compensation; and

20 (ii) fluid milk.

1 (B) If a supervisory union grows, raises, or produces food, it shall
2 assign a fair market value to that food for the purpose of reporting its cost.

3 (C) A vendor that contracts with a supervisory union to supply food
4 products shall certify to the supervisory union which of the food products
5 supplied meet the definition of local to Vermont, taking into account the
6 exclusions under subdivision 5(A) of this subsection (c).

7 (6) If a supervisory union is eligible for a grant under subdivision (5) of
8 this subsection, the Agency shall, on or before the following April 30 after
9 submission of the supervisory union’s application, which is due on or before
10 January 15 of that year, make the grant payment, subject to appropriation,
11 which shall be determined as follows:

12 (A) \$0.15 per reimbursable school lunch served in the prior school
13 year through the National School Lunch Program for supervisory unions
14 purchasing at least 15 percent locally produced foods;

15 (B) \$0.20 per reimbursable school lunch served in the prior school
16 year through the National School Lunch Program for supervisory unions
17 purchasing at least 20 percent locally produced foods; or

18 (C) \$0.25 per reimbursable school lunch served in the prior school
19 year through the National School Lunch Program for supervisory unions
20 purchasing at least 25 percent locally produced foods.

1 (7) A supervisory union may apply for and receive grant funding under
2 subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection for each year that it qualifies for this
3 grant funding. For applications covering the 2020–2021 school year, meals
4 served through the Summer Food Service Program shall also be counted for
5 this grant payment.

6 (8) The Agency of Education may perform sample audits for any year
7 that grant funds are paid to supervisory unions under subdivision (6) of this
8 subsection to verify that information provided to the Agency under
9 subdivision (5) of this subsection is accurate. If the Agency makes a grant
10 payment under subdivision (6) of this subsection to a supervisory union that
11 was based on inaccurate information reported by the supervisory union, the
12 Agency may seek reimbursement from the supervisory union for an
13 overpayment or reimburse the supervisory union for an underpayment or may
14 adjust future grant amounts under this section to reflect the over- or
15 underpayment.

16 (d)(1) On or before January 31, 2022 and annually thereafter, the Agency
17 of Education shall submit to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on
18 Education and the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on
19 Education in an aggregated form:

1 (A) the information received from supervisory unions regarding the
2 percentage of locally produced foods, as the supervisory unions define them,
3 that were reported under subsection (b) of this section; and

4 (B) the percentage of locally produced foods, using the grant funding
5 definition, that were reported under subdivision (c)(5) of this section and the
6 amount of grant funding paid to supervisory unions under subdivision (c)(6) of
7 this section in the prior school year.

8 (2) The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) regarding expiration of required
9 reports shall not apply to the reports required by this subsection.

10 Sec. 8. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; STAFFING

11 The following position is created in the Agency of Education: one full-
12 time, classified position specializing in the administration of school food
13 programs. The position established in this section shall be transferred and
14 converted from an existing vacant position in the Executive Branch of State
15 government. There is appropriated to the Agency of Education from the
16 General Fund for fiscal year 2022 the amount of \$100,000.00 for salary,
17 benefits, and operating expenses.

18 * * * Task Force on Universal School Lunch * * *

19 Sec. 9. TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSAL SCHOOL LUNCH; REPORT

20 (a) Creation. There is created the Task Force on Universal School Lunch.
21 The Task Force shall make recommendations on how, not later than the 2026–

1 2027 school year, to achieve the goal of providing universal school lunch for
2 all public school students at no cost to the students or their families.

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

4 (1) Secretary of Education or designee;

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

6 (3) Secretary of Agriculture or designee.

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

11 (1) recommend funding sources for universal school lunch;

12 (2) recommend what data should be collected by local education
13 agencies, school districts, and schools to qualify for federal funds based on
14 student poverty, the means by which the data should be collected, the
15 frequency of collection, and how this data should be reported to the Agency of
16 Education and the frequency of this reporting;

17 (3) consider how other states offer and fund universal school meals at no
18 cost to students or their families; and

19 (4) meet with Vermont’s federal delegation to discuss what changes
20 could be made to federal law and regulations to more readily facilitate
21 universal school meals.

1 (d) Collaboration. In performing its duties under this section, the Task
2 Force shall collaborate with Hunger Free Vermont, the School Nutrition
3 Association of Vermont, the Vermont Superintendents Association, the
4 Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Council of Special
5 Education Administrators, the Vermont Principals' Association, and the
6 Vermont-National Education Association.

7 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2022, the Task Force shall submit a
8 written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education and on
9 Appropriations, the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, and the
10 Senate Committee on Agriculture with its findings and any recommendations
11 for legislative action.

12 (f) Meetings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 10. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

(Committee vote: _____)

Senator _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE