

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred Senate Bill No. 16  
3 entitled “An act relating to the creation of the School Discipline Advisory  
4 Council” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends  
5 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and  
6 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

8 The General Assembly finds that:

9 (1) Nationally, millions of students are removed from the classroom  
10 each year for disciplinary reasons.

11 (2) U.S. Department of Education data reveals that in the 2013–2014  
12 school year, of the 50 million students nationally enrolled in schools:

13 (A) 2.7 million received in-school suspensions;

14 (B) 1.6 million received one out-of-school suspension;

15 (C) 1.1 million received more than one out-of-school suspension; and

16 (D) 111,215 were expelled.

17 (3) Exclusionary discipline is used mostly in middle and high schools,

18 and mostly for minor misconduct, according to the Council on State

19 Governments’ Justice Center.

1           (4) Students who are suspended are at significantly higher risk of  
2           academic failure, of dropping out of school, and of entering the juvenile justice  
3           system according to the Council on State Governments’ Justice Center.

4           (5) Nationally, students of certain racial and ethnic groups and students  
5           with disabilities are disciplined at higher rates than their peers, beginning in  
6           preschool, as evidenced by 2013–2014 data from the U.S. Department of  
7           Education’s Office for Civil Rights.

8           (A) Black students (representing approximately 15 percent of the  
9           U.S. student population) are suspended and expelled at a rate two times greater  
10           than White students (representing approximately 50 percent of the U.S. student  
11           population).

12           (B) Students with disabilities who have individualized education  
13           plans (IEPs) are more likely to be suspended than students without disabilities.

14           (6)(A) According to the Agency of Education’s Report on Exclusionary  
15           Discipline Response, January 2017, for the 2015–2016 school year, 3,616  
16           Vermont public school students were excluded, representing 4.7 percent of  
17           total enrollment.

18           (B) The Agency of Education found that students who are non-  
19           Caucasian, participate in the free and reduced lunch program, have Section 504  
20           or IEP plans, male, or are English Learners are over-represented in terms of the

1 number who experience exclusion and the number of incidents resulting in  
2 exclusion.

3 (C) Use of school discipline strategies, such as exclusionary  
4 discipline, restraint, seclusion, referral to law enforcement, and school-related  
5 arrest, varies widely throughout the State.

6 (7) Valuable data on school discipline in Vermont is largely unavailable  
7 and incomplete.

8 (A) Vermont does not publicly report any discipline data on the  
9 Agency of Education website, even if this data has been collected by schools  
10 and districts and reported to the Agency of Education.

11 (B) Some relevant data is not readily available from the Vermont  
12 Agency of Education, such as the total number of school days missed by  
13 students due to suspension or expulsion.

14 (C) Other relevant data is not maintained by the Vermont Agency of  
15 Education, such as data indicating whether students received educational  
16 services during suspensions, beyond federal requirements for certain students  
17 with disabilities.

18 (D) The public school discipline data that Vermont submitted to the  
19 U.S. Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection for the  
20 2013–2014 school year, while available, is incomplete and may be inaccurate.

1           (8) More data on school discipline practices in Vermont is necessary to  
2           understand what strategies are effective and to encourage the adoption of these  
3           strategies at the local level.

4           Sec. 2. TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFORM; REPORT

5           (a) Creation. There is created the Task Force on School Discipline Reform.  
6           The Task Force shall, in conjunction with the Agency of Education, make  
7           recommendations to end suspensions and expulsions for all but the most  
8           serious student behaviors and collect and analyze data regarding school  
9           discipline in Vermont public and approved independent schools in order to  
10           inform strategic planning, guide statewide and local decision making and  
11           resource allocation, and measure the effectiveness of statewide and local  
12           policies and practices.

13           (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the Secretary of  
14           Education and not more than 20 members appointed by the Secretary of  
15           Education, who shall be Vermont residents, and shall be:

16           (1) educators;

17           (2) administrators;

18           (3) high school students;

19           (4) special educators;

20           (5) parents of students;

21           (6) school board members; and

1           (7) members of community groups working in the areas of racial justice  
2           and school discipline reform.

3           (c) Membership diversity. The Secretary shall seek, in making  
4           appointments to the Task Force, racial diversity in membership and shall  
5           include representatives of public and approved independent schools.

6           (d) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall, in conjunction with the  
7           Agency of Education, make recommendations to end suspensions and  
8           expulsions for all but the most serious student behaviors and shall perform the  
9           following tasks:

10           (1) review in-school services and availability of these services in various  
11           supervisory unions, approved independent schools, and regions of the State  
12           that are available to support students who would otherwise face exclusionary  
13           discipline;

14           (2) recommend additional or more uniform in-school services that  
15           should be available to students who would otherwise face exclusionary  
16           discipline;

17           (3) define the most serious behaviors that, after considering all other  
18           alternatives and supports, should remain eligible for suspension or expulsion;

19           (4) identify best practice procedures that minimize law enforcement  
20           contacts for students facing in-school or exclusionary discipline;

1           (5) analyze current data collection definitions and practices used in  
2           Vermont for misconduct and for disciplinary actions that result in a student’s  
3           exclusion from the classroom and develop standard definitions and practices,  
4           as necessary, for the collection of all appropriate data related to school  
5           discipline;

6           (6) analyze, on a school-district and approved independent schools basis,  
7           the available data regarding suspensions and expulsions and identify, collect,  
8           and analyze additional data necessary to inform the work of the Task Force,  
9           including:

10           (A) the total number of instances of expulsions and suspensions in  
11           each grade operated by the district or approved independent school;

12           (B) the total number of students in each grade operated by the district  
13           or approved independent school who were expelled or suspended and the  
14           number of instances of expulsion or suspension, or both, for each student;

15           (C) the duration of each instance of expulsion and suspension;

16           (D) the infraction for which each expulsion and suspension was  
17           imposed; and

18           (E) each instance of referral to local law enforcement authorities or  
19           the juvenile justice system; and

1           (7) share insights and best practices with Vermont educators, school  
2           administrators, policymakers, agencies, and education and advocacy  
3           organizations.

4           (f) Report. On or before November 30, 2021, the Task Force shall submit a  
5           written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education with its  
6           findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

7           (g) Meetings.

8           (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Task  
9           Force to occur on or before August 1, 2021.

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

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

13           (4) The Task Force shall meet not more than six times.

14           (h) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,  
15           and legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

16           (i) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Task Force shall be  
17           entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted  
18           under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six meetings of the Task Force.

19           Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

20           The sum of \$[        ] is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year  
21           2022 to the Agency of Education for per diem and reimbursement of expenses

1 for members of the Task Force on School Discipline Reform created under  
2 Sec. 2 of this act and for expenses incurred by the Task Force in carrying out  
3 its duties.

4 Sec. 4. DATA COLLECTION; SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

5 (a) On or before the first meeting of the Task Force established in Sec. 2 of  
6 this act, the Secretary of Education shall collect and distribute to the members  
7 of the Task Force all readily available data on suspensions and expulsions from  
8 each Vermont public school and approved independent school in academic  
9 years 2013–2014 through 2018–2019, including the data specified in  
10 subdivision (d)(6) of Sec. 2.

11 (b) On or before July 1, 2022, the Secretary of Education and the State  
12 Board of Education shall incorporate the Task Force’s standard definitions and  
13 practices developed in subdivision (d)(5) of Sec. 2 of this act into their data  
14 collection rules and procedures and, to the extent permitted by 20 U.S.C.  
15 § 1232g (family educational and privacy rights) and any regulations adopted  
16 thereunder, shall require the collection of data as recommended by the Task  
17 Force beginning with the 2023–2024 school year.

18 Sec. 5. OUTCOME ANALYSIS

19 On or before January 15 of each year from 2025 to 2030, the Secretary of  
20 Education shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees  
21 on Education on suspensions and expulsions from each Vermont public school



1 and approved independent school in the prior school year, including the data  
2 specified in subdivision (d)(6) of Sec. 2.

3 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

4 This act shall take effect on passage.

5 and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating  
6 to the creation of the Task Force on School Discipline Reform”

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9 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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\_\_\_\_\_

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Senator \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE