

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred Joint
3 Resolution J.R.H. 2 entitled “Joint resolution sincerely apologizing and
4 expressing sorrow and regret to all individual Vermonters and their families
5 and descendants who were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics
6 policies and practices,” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
7 recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the joint resolution be
8 amended by striking out all the Whereas and Resolved clauses and inserting in
9 lieu thereof the following:

10 Whereas, starting in the early 1900s, laws and associated policies were
11 adopted to promote the eugenics movement, and the title of the book *Breeding*
12 *Better Vermonters* accurately describes the movement’s purported intent, and

13 Whereas, this movement targeted for elimination those it deemed
14 delinquent, defective, and dependent persons, and

15 Whereas, in 1912, the Vermont General Assembly passed S.79, “An act to
16 authorize and provide for the sterilization of imbeciles, feeble-minded, and
17 insane persons, rapists, confirmed criminals and other defectives,” however,
18 Governor Allen M. Fletcher vetoed the bill, citing constitutional concerns that
19 Attorney General Rufus E. Brown had raised, and

1 Whereas, nevertheless, State agencies and institutions adopted policies and
2 procedures to carry out the intent of the vetoed legislation and the beliefs of the
3 eugenics movement, and

4 Whereas, in 1925, University of Vermont zoology professor Henry F.
5 Perkins established the Eugenics Survey of Vermont, with the participation of
6 leaders within Vermont State government, to collect evidence of Vermonters’
7 alleged delinquency, dependency, and deficiency, and

8 Whereas, these State-sanctioned policies primarily targeted individuals,
9 families, and communities whose heritage was French Canadian, French-
10 Indian, or of other mixed ethnic or racial composition, and persons whose
11 extended families’ successor generations now identify either as Abenaki or as
12 members of other indigenous bands or tribes, and

13 Whereas, in 1927, S.59, “An act related to Voluntary Eugenic
14 Sterilization” passed the Senate but was defeated in the House, and

15 Whereas, the General Assembly adopted 1931 Acts and Resolves No. 174
16 (Act 174), “An Act for Human Betterment by Voluntary Sterilization,” for the
17 purpose of eliminating from the future Vermont genetic pool persons deemed
18 mentally unfit to procreate, and

19 Whereas, this State-sanctioned eugenics policy was not an isolated example
20 of oppression but reflected the historic marginalization, discriminatory
21 treatment, and displacement of these targeted groups in Vermont, and

1 Whereas, eugenics advocates promoted sterilization for the protection of
2 Vermont’s “old stock” and to preserve the physical and social environment of
3 Vermont for their children, and

4 Whereas, the Eugenics Survey received assistance from State and municipal
5 officials, individuals, and private organizations, and the resulting sterilization,
6 institutionalization, and separation policies intruded on the lives of its victims
7 and had devastating and irreversible impacts that still persist in the lives of the
8 targeted groups and especially the descendants of those who were directly
9 impacted, and

10 Whereas, in conducting the Eugenics Survey, the surveyors were granted
11 access to case files from State agencies and institutions, and the files were
12 made available to persons of authority, including police departments, social
13 workers, educators, and town officials, and

14 Whereas, as a result of the opening of these files, children and adults were
15 removed from families, individuals were institutionalized or incarcerated,
16 family connections were severed, and the sense of kinship, continuity and
17 community was lost, and

18 Whereas, the legacy of the eugenics movement continues to influence some
19 of Vermont’s current policies and legislation, now therefore be it

1 Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

2 That the General Assembly sincerely apologizes and expresses sorrow and
3 regret to all individual Vermonters and their families and descendants who
4 were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices,
5 and be it further

6 Resolved: That the General Assembly should continue to work to eradicate
7 the lasting legacy of its prior actions by listening to and working with the
8 affected individuals and communities.

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14 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE