

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to which was
3 referred Senate Bill No. 30 entitled “An act relating to creating a Sister State
4 Program” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends
5 that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out all
6 after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 **Sec. 1. PURPOSE OF VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM**

8 **(a) The purpose of the Vermont Sister State Program is to create,**
9 **administer, and maintain mutually beneficial and long-lasting partnerships**
10 **between Vermont and other select countries or provinces.**

11 **(b) The Program will promote and foster cultural exchange, tourism, trade,**
12 **and education between Vermont and its Sister States.**

13 **(c) Through the Program, the Vermont Sister State Committee will**
14 **communicate with and support active-duty personnel, foreign service officers,**
15 **aid organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and Peace Corps volunteers**
16 **who are working in Sister States.**

17 Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. § 2488 is added to read:

18 **§ 2488. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM**

19 **(a) Creation; administration. The Vermont Sister State Program is created**
20 **within the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.**

21 **(b) Oversight.**

1 (1) The Vermont Sister State Committee composed of the following
2 members shall oversee the Program:

3 (A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or
4 designee;

5 (B) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council
6 or designee;

7 (C) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee; and

8 (D) six members, with experience in international relations;
9 international education; cultural exchange; or international arts, recreation, or
10 governance, as follows:

11 (i) two members, appointed by the Senate Committee on
12 Committees;

13 (ii) two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

14 (iii) two members, appointed by the Governor.

15 (2) The members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(D) of this
16 subsection shall serve for terms of five years or until the member's earlier
17 resignation, death, or removal for cause.

18 (3) The Committee shall remove a member upon a two-thirds vote of
19 remaining members for a member's:

20 (A) gross incompetency;

21 (B) failure to discharge duties; or

1 (C) malfeasance, immorality, or other cause inimical to the general
2 good of the State.

3 (4) If a member resigns, dies, or is removed for cause, the Committee
4 shall notify the appointing authority in writing within 30 days after the
5 resignation, death, or removal, and the appointing authority shall appoint a new
6 member for the remainder of the member’s term within 30 days after receiving
7 notice of the resignation, death, or removal.

8 (5) The members of the Committee shall select a chair by a majority
9 vote.

10 (6) The members of the Committee may establish one or more
11 committees or subcommittees and adopt such procedural rules as it shall
12 determine necessary and appropriate to perform its work.

13 (c) Administration. Subject to the approval of the Vermont Sister State
14 Committee, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development:

15 (1) shall provide administrative support to the Program;

16 (2) may contract for administration of part or all of the Program with a
17 nonprofit organization that has expertise in international affairs; and

18 (3) shall create an application form and process for evaluating Sister
19 State relationships.

20 (d) Program requirements.

1 (1) The Vermont Sister State Committee shall only enter into Sister
2 State agreements with countries or provinces formally recognized by the U.S.
3 Department of State and upon finding that a relationship meets the following
4 goals:

5 (A) the relationship fosters understanding and collaboration between
6 residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in Vermont
7 and residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in the
8 Sister State;

9 (B) the relationship creates opportunities for cultural exchanges and
10 joint programs for educational, recreational, artistic, humanitarian, and
11 economic purposes that benefit both Vermont and the Sister State;

12 (C) the relationship promotes peace, human rights, and
13 environmental sustainability; and

14 (D) the relationship involves a diverse range of individuals, sectors,
15 organizations, and communities in Vermont and the Sister State.

16 (2) There shall not be more than five Sister State agreements at one
17 time.

18 (3) A Sister State agreement shall not initially exceed eight years and
19 may be renewed for five-year increments upon approval of the Committee if it
20 determines the relationship has met the goals of the Sister State Program.

1 (4) The Committee shall establish the Sister State Program’s priorities,
2 objectives, and goals.

3 (5) The Committee shall provide a written report to the relevant
4 legislative committees and to the Governor beginning on or before February 1,
5 2026, and every two years thereafter, concerning the status of the Program, its
6 programs, agreements, recommended changes to statutory language, and
7 progress meeting its goals.

8 (6) The Committee may terminate a Sister State agreement if it deems
9 the agreement to be no longer in the best interest of the State.

10 (e) Compensation.

11 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
12 Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem
13 compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23.

14 (2) Unless otherwise compensated by the member’s employer for
15 performance of the member’s duties on the Committee, a nonlegislative
16 member of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
17 reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

18 (3) Payments to members of the Committee authorized under this
19 subsection shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of
20 Commerce and Community Development or other specific appropriation made
21 for that purpose.

1 (f) Municipalities. The provisions of this section shall not preempt
2 municipalities in this State from creating similar agreements with other
3 municipalities in this country or internationally.

4 Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION

5 The authorities authorized to make appointments to the Vermont Sister
6 State Committee pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2488(b)(1)(D)(i)–(iii) shall appoint
7 members to initial terms of three, four, and five years, respectively.

8 Sec. 4. SUNSET

9 The Vermont Sister State Program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2030.

10 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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19 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE