

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 consider fostering the connection of immigrants and  
12 refugee communities in Vermont with their nations of origin.

13 (c) The Program will promote and foster cultural exchange, tourism, trade,  
14 and education between Vermont and its Sister States.

15 (d) Through the Program, the Vermont Sister State Program Committee  
16 will communicate with and support military personnel, foreign service officers,  
17 aid organizations, nongovernmental organizations, Peace Corps volunteers,  
18 and any other relevant entities, as determined by the Committee, that are  
19 working in Sister States.

1       Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. § 2478 is added to read:

2       § 2478. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

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

5           (b) Oversight.

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

8           (A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or  
9       designee;

10          (B) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council  
11       or designee of the Board of the Trustees;

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

13          (D) six members, with experience in international relations;  
14       international education; cultural exchange; or international arts, recreation, or  
15       governance, with at least one member from an immigrant or refugee  
16       community, as follows:

17           (i) two members, appointed by the Senate Committee on  
18       Committees;

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

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

21          (2) The Committee shall select a chair by a majority vote.

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

4           (4) A member serves at the pleasure of the member's appointing  
5           authority.

6           (5) If a vacancy occurs on the Committee, the Chair shall notify the  
7           appointing authority in writing within 30 days after the vacancy and the  
8           appointing authority shall appoint a new member for the remainder of the  
9           member's term within 30 days after receiving notice of the vacancy.

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

13           (c) Administration. Subject to the approval of the Committee, the Agency  
14           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) There shall not be more than five Sister State agreements at one  
2 time.

3           (2) The Committee shall only enter into Sister State agreements with  
4 countries or provinces formally recognized by the U.S. Department of State.

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

9           (4) The Committee may terminate a Sister State agreement if it deems  
10 the agreement to be no longer in the best interests of Vermont.

11           (5) The Committee shall provide a written report to the General  
12 Assembly and to the Governor beginning on or before February 1, 2026, and  
13 every two years thereafter, concerning the status of the Program, its programs,  
14 agreements, recommended changes to statutory language, and progress  
15 meeting its goals.

16           (e) Compensation.

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

1           (2) A nonlegislative member of the Committee shall be entitled to per  
2           diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under  
3           32 V.S.A. § 1010.

4           (f) Municipalities. The provisions of this section shall not preempt  
5           municipalities in this State from creating similar agreements with other  
6           municipalities.

7           Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION; INITIAL REPORT

8           (a) Initial appointments. The authorities authorized to make appointments  
9           to the Vermont Sister State Program Committee pursuant to 3 V.S.A.  
10           § 2478(b)(1)(D)(i)–(iii) shall appoint members to initial terms of three, four,  
11           and five years, respectively. Initial appointments to the Committee shall be  
12           made not later than October 1, 2024.

13           (b) First meeting. The Secretary of Commerce and Community  
14           Development shall call the first meeting of the Committee on or before  
15           November 1, 2024.

16           (c) Initial report. Following the selection of a chair, the first order of  
17           business for the Committee shall be to meet to discuss the scope, goals, and  
18           objectives of the Vermont Sister State Program that align with the purposes of  
19           the Program as set forth in this act. The Committee may invite relevant  
20           stakeholders to consult with when discussing recommendations.

1           (1) An initial report on the Committee’s progress on the work set forth  
2           in this subsection shall be submitted to the General Assembly on or before  
3           April 1, 2025.

4           (2) A final report shall include the Committee’s recommendations for  
5           legislative language that sets forth the scope, goals, and objectives of the  
6           Vermont Sister State Program. The report shall also include the names of the  
7           stakeholders that the Committee heard from during its work. The report shall  
8           be submitted to the General Assembly on or before November 1, 2025.

9           (d) Program delay. The Committee shall not approve or enter into a Sister  
10          State Agreement before July 1, 2026.

11          Sec. 4. REPEAL; VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

12          The Vermont Sister State Program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2030.  
13          After January 1, 2029, but before November 30, 2029, the Chair of the  
14          Vermont Sister State Program Committee shall send notice of the Program  
15          repeal date to the chairs of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic  
16          Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing  
17          and General Affairs.

18          Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

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2 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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\_\_\_\_\_

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Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE