

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 to promote and  
13 foster cultural exchange, tourism, trade, and education between Vermont and  
14 its Sister States.

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

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

2       § 2488. 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, with at least one member from an immigrant or refugee  
8       community, shall oversee the Program:

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

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

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

14          (D) six members, with experience in international relations;  
15       international education; cultural exchange; or international arts, recreation, or  
16       governance, 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.

1           (2) 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 for cause.

4           (3) The Committee shall remove a member upon a two-thirds vote of  
5           remaining members for a member’s:

6                   (A) gross incompetency;

7                   (B) failure to discharge duties; or

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

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

15           (5) The Committee shall select a chair by a majority vote.

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

19           (c) Administration. Subject to the approval of the Committee, the Agency  
20           of Commerce and Community Development:

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

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

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

5           (d) Program requirements.

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

10           (A) the relationship fosters understanding and collaboration between  
11           residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in Vermont  
12           and residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in the  
13           Sister State;

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

17           (C) the relationship promotes peace, human rights, and  
18           environmental sustainability; and

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

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

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

7           (4) The Committee shall establish the Vermont Sister State Program's  
8 priorities, objectives, and goals.

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

14           (6) The Committee may terminate a Sister State agreement if it deems  
15 the agreement to be no longer in the best interests of the State.

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.

20           (2) Unless otherwise compensated by the member's employer for  
21 performance of the member's duties on the Committee, a nonlegislative

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

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

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

10 Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION

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

14 (b) Initial appointments to the Committee shall be made not later than  
15 October 1, 2024.

16 (c) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall call the  
17 first meeting of the Committee on or before November 1, 2024.

18 Sec. 4. REPEAL; VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

19 The Vermont Sister State Program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2030.  
20 The Chair of the Vermont Sister State Program Committee shall notify the  
21 chairs of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and

1 the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General  
2 Affairs that the Program is up for repeal within a year of June 30, 2030, but not  
3 later than November 30, 2029.

4 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

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

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\_\_\_\_\_

11

Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE