

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) The Vermont Sister State Program Committee shall only enter into
2 Sister State agreements with countries or provinces formally recognized by the
3 U.S. Department of State and upon finding that a relationship meets the
4 following 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 programs for educational, recreational, artistic, humanitarian, and economic
11 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 Vermont Sister State
21 Program.

1 (4) The Committee shall establish the Vermont Sister State Program's
2 objectives that align with the goals listed in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

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

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) A nonlegislative member of the Committee shall be entitled to per
15 diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under
16 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

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

1 Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION

2 (a) The authorities authorized to make appointments to the Vermont Sister
3 State Program Committee pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2478(b)(1)(D)(i)–(iii) shall
4 appoint members to initial terms of three, four, and five years, respectively.

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

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

9 Sec. 4. REPEAL; VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

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

16 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

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2 (Committee vote: _____)

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4

Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE