

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 416
3 entitled “An act relating to teacher workforce development” respectfully
4 reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the bill be
5 amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu
6 thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 6 is added to read:

8 Subchapter 6. Forgivable Loan Incentive Programs

9 § 2871. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

10 PROGRAM

11 (a) As used in this section:

12 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
13 established in section 2821 of this title.

14 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
15 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

16 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
17 institution as defined under section 2822 of this title.

18 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
19 tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of required books
20 and supplies for up to full-time attendance in an undergraduate or graduate
21 program at an eligible school.

1 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive
2 Program created under this section.

3 (b) The Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created
4 and shall be administered by the Corporation. The Program provides
5 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to
6 working as a teacher in a Vermont public school and who meet the eligibility
7 requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The intent of the Program is to
8 encourage students to enter into teaching professions, with an emphasis on
9 encouraging Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters, New
10 Americans, and other historically underrepresented communities in an effort to
11 diversify the educator workforce.

12 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
13 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
14 General Assembly for this purpose.

15 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
16 whether a resident or nonresident of Vermont, shall satisfy all of the following
17 requirements:

18 (1) be enrolled in teaching program at an eligible school;

19 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
20 is enrolled;

1 (3) agree to work as a teacher in Vermont employed directly by a public
2 school located in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for
3 each year of forgivable loan awarded;

4 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
5 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
6 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
7 service required in this subsection;

8 (5) have completed the Program’s application form, the Free
9 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and for Vermont residents, the
10 Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance
11 with a schedule determined by the Corporation; and

12 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
13 require.

14 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a teacher in a Vermont public
15 school for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan
16 benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by
17 the Corporation, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness
18 for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit
19 agreement or promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering
20 the Program.

1 (f) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this
2 section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds
3 are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over
4 and shall be available to the Corporation in the following fiscal year to award
5 additional forgivable loans as set forth in this section.

6 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
7 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
8 forgivable loan amounts. The Corporation shall not use more than seven
9 percent of the funds appropriated for the Program for its costs of
10 administration and may recoup its reasonable costs of collecting the forgivable
11 loans in repayment.

12 Sec. 2. **EMERGING PATHWAYS TO TEACHING**; REPORT

13 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to encourage and support the
14 development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators. To
15 combat the growing educator shortage throughout the State and meet the needs
16 of Vermont students, it is necessary to invest in nontraditional educator
17 training programs.

18 (b) Grant program.

19 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2024, there is established the
20 **Emerging Pathways** Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of
21 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional

1 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of
2 Education’s **emerging pathways**, including peer review, transcript review,
3 emergency licensure, provisional licensure, and apprentice pathways, with the
4 goal of increased program completion rates and increased rates of licensure of
5 underrepresented demographics.

6 (2) Program administration. The Agency shall adopt policies,
7 procedures, and guidelines necessary for implementation of the Program
8 described in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

9 (3) Eligibility criteria. The Agency shall issue grants to organizations,
10 school districts, or a group of school districts for the development and
11 administration of programs and program coordinators designed to provide
12 prospective educators in **emerging pathways to teaching with the support**
13 necessary **for successful entry into the educator workforce. Recruitment,**
14 **support, and retention of prospective educator candidates shall focus on**
15 **diversity, equity, and inclusion. Support provided through the Program may**
16 **include:**

17 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

18 (B) local, educator-led seminars designed around the Vermont
19 licensure portfolio themes;

20 (C) local educator mentors;

1 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
2 process; and

3 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
4 of licensure.

5 (4) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Agency of Education
6 shall report to the Senate and House Committees on Education on the status of
7 the implementation of the Emerging Pathways Grant Program and a summary
8 and performance review of the programs to which grants were awarded. The
9 report shall include any metrics used in the performance review, the number of
10 program participants, endorsement areas of participants, feedback from
11 participants and mentors, and any recommendation for legislative action.

12 Sec. 3. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

13 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, teacher licensure
14 fee requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a) are suspended during fiscal years
15 2024–2029.

16 (b) In fiscal year 2024, the estimated fees that would have been collected
17 under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a) shall be accounted for through funds appropriated
18 to the Agency of Education from the General Fund.

19 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION

20 Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), the sum of \$712,500.00 is
21 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal

1 year 2024 for the purpose of funding the **Emerging** Pathways Grant Program
2 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

3 **Sec. 5. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY**

4 (a) Educator demographics. In order to understand and improve the
5 longstanding and well-documented **issue of underrepresentation in the**
6 **Vermont educator workforce, including underrepresentation of Black,**
7 **Indigenous, and Persons of Color; New Americans; and other historically**
8 **underrepresented communities,** the Agency of Education shall collect
9 demographic information from educators and report such information in its
10 annual teacher and staff full-time equivalencies report. The Agency shall
11 submit the educator demographic information section of the report annually to
12 the General Assembly on or before each January 15.

13 (b) **Historically Underrepresented** Educator Affinity Groups Grant
14 Program.

15 (1) There is created the **Historically Underrepresented** Educator Affinity
16 Groups Grant Program for the purpose of providing grants for the support of
17 existing and the development of new educator affinity groups for historically
18 underrepresented groups. The Agency of Education shall administer the
19 Program.

1 (2) The Agency shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
2 necessary for the implementation of the Program established pursuant to this
3 subsection (b).

4 (3) The sum of \$30,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the
5 Agency of Education in fiscal year 2024 for the purpose of funding the
6 Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant Program
7 created in this subsection (b).

8 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

9 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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17 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE