

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to which was
3 referred House Bill No. 484 entitled “An act relating to enhancing workforce
4 and economic development opportunities” respectfully reports that it has
5 considered the same and recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

6 * * * Education Workforce * * *

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 and apprentice
3 pathways, with the goal of increased program completion rates and increased
4 rates of licensure of underrepresented demographics.

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

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

16 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

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

19 (C) local educator mentors;

20 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
21 process; and

1 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
2 of licensure.

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

10 Sec. 3. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

11 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, peer review
12 process one-time licensure fee requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a)(7) are
13 suspended during fiscal years 2024–2029.

14 (b) In fiscal year 2024, the estimated fees that would have been collected
15 under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a)(7) shall be accounted for through funds
16 appropriated to the Agency of Education from the General Fund.

17 Sec. 4. EDUCATION WORKFORCE; APPROPRIATIONS

18 (a) Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), in fiscal year 2024 the amount of
19 \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of
20 Education for the purpose of funding the Emerging Pathways Grant Program
21 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

1 (b) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from
2 the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the
3 Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 16 V.S.A.
4 § 2871.

5 Sec. 5. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

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

15 (b) Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant
16 Program.

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

1 Institutions about the progress and effectiveness of its professional
2 development initiative. The Department shall make management, supervisory,
3 and frontline staff available to testify.

4 (d) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 General Fund to the Department of Corrections for the purpose of contracting
6 or expanding an existing contract with a vendor to provide supervisory and
7 management professional development services to the Department’s
8 employees in accordance with the Department’s efforts to address an employee
9 workforce crisis and strengthen workplace satisfaction.

10 Sec. 7. 28 V.S.A. § 126 is added to read:

11 § 126. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM;

12 CONFIDENTIALITY

13 (a) As used in this section:

14 (1) “Department” has the same meaning as in subdivision 3(4) of this
15 title.

16 (2) “Participant” means a Department staff member who has been
17 involved in a traumatic incident by reason of employment at the Department
18 and who has agreed to participate in the Department’s peer support program.

19 (3) “Peer support” means appropriate support and services offered by a
20 peer support specialist to a participant.

1 (4) “Peer support program” means a program established by the
2 Department of Corrections to provide appropriate peer support services to
3 Department staff members.

4 (5) “Peer support session” means a peer support program session for a
5 Department staff member who has been involved in a traumatic incident by
6 reason of employment at the Department or related to other personal matters.

7 (6) “Peer support specialist” means a Department staff member who, by
8 reason of the staff member’s prior experience, training, or interest, has
9 expressed a desire and has been selected to provide appropriate peer support
10 services to a participant.

11 (7) “Staff member” means a supervising officer as defined in
12 subdivision 3(9) of this title, a correctional officer as defined in subdivision
13 3(10) of this title, and any other employee of the Department.

14 (b)(1) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, any
15 communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer
16 support session of the peer support program, including any oral or written
17 information conveyed during a peer support session, shall not be disclosed by
18 any individual participating in the peer support session.

19 (2) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any
20 communication relating to a peer support session between peer support
21 specialists, between peer support specialists and participants of the peer

1 support program, between participants of the peer support program, or between
2 any other Department staff member, including any oral or written information,
3 shall not be disclosed by any individual participating in the communication.

4 (3) Written communications described in this subsection, such as notes,
5 records, and reports related to a peer support session, are exempt from public
6 inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept
7 confidential. The Public Records Act exemptions created in this section shall
8 not be subject to the provisions of 1 V.S.A. § 317(e) (repeal of Public Records
9 Act exemptions).

10 (c) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any
11 communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer
12 support session, including any oral or written communication, such as notes,
13 records, and reports related to the peer support session, shall not be admissible
14 in a judicial, administrative, or arbitration proceeding. Limitations on
15 disclosure imposed by this subsection include disclosure during any discovery
16 conducted as part of an adjudicatory proceeding. Limitations on disclosure
17 imposed by this subsection shall not include knowledge acquired by the
18 Department or staff members from observations made during the course of
19 employment or information acquired by the by the Department or staff
20 members during the course of employment that is otherwise subject to
21 discovery or introduction into evidence.

1 (d)(1) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of
2 this section shall only apply to a peer support session conducted by an
3 individual who has:

4 (A) been designated by the Department or the peer support program
5 to act as a peer support specialist; and

6 (B) received and completed training in peer support and providing
7 emotional and moral support to Department staff members who have been
8 involved in emotionally traumatic incidents by reason of their employment or
9 other personal matters.

10 (2) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of
11 this section shall not apply to the following information as it pertains to an
12 individual designated to receive such information in the normal course the
13 individual’s professional responsibilities:

14 (A) any threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant of a peer
15 support session or any information conveyed in a peer support session relating
16 to a threat of suicide or homicide;

17 (B) any information relating to the abuse of a child or vulnerable
18 adult, or other information that is required to be reported by law;

19 (C) any admission of criminal conduct; or

20 (D) any admission of a plan to commit a crime.

1 (e) Nothing in this section shall prohibit any communications between peer
2 support specialists regarding a peer support session or between peer support
3 specialists and participants of the peer support program.

4 (f)(1) The Department shall not be liable for any disclosure made in
5 violation of this section by an a peer support specialist or participant who
6 participates in a peer support session.

7 (2) A peer support specialist who in good faith provides appropriate peer
8 support services to a participant of the peer support program shall be immune
9 from criminal or civil liability for any injury to the participant unless the peer
10 support specialist’s conduct constitutes gross negligence, recklessness, or
11 intentional misconduct.

12 * * * Young Adult Workforce * * *

13 Sec. 8. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM;

14 APPROPRIATION

15 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated from the
16 General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to continue
17 funding through the pilot project the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program,
18 which supports workforce development goals through creating meaningful
19 paid service and learning opportunities for young adults, through the Serve,
20 Learn, and Earn Partnership made up of the Vermont Youth Conservation
21 Corps, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Works for Women, and Resource VT.

1 The Department shall enter into a grant agreement with the Partnership that
2 specifies the required services and outcomes for the Program.

3 * * * Adult Learning * * *

4 Sec. 9. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to the Agency of Education for adult learning services.

7 * * * Climate Workforce * * *

8 Sec. 10. CLIMATE WORKFORCE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN;

9 ADVANCE VERMONT: APPROPRIATION

10 (a) Advance Vermont shall create a climate workforce-focused digital
11 public resource that engages current and prospective employees, Vermont
12 youth, adults interested in changing careers, and individuals yet to earn a
13 postsecondary credential, or those who are looking to upskill.

14 (b) The resource shall include:

15 (1) centralized information about career and education opportunities in
16 Vermont that build awareness of needed climate careers; and

17 (2) video series and other media featuring opportunities with employers
18 and employee success stories.

19 (d) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the
20 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a subgrant to
21 Advance Vermont to implement this section.

1 Sec. 11. VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND;

2 BUSINESS COACHING; APPROPRIATION

3 (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$180,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
5 subgrant to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to expand its Business
6 Coaching program to work with a group of existing energy services businesses
7 interested in adopting a climate-centered mission and working with trades
8 persons looking to start their own climate-centered business.

9 (b) The Fund shall recruit a cohort of up to twelve existing companies and
10 a cohort of up to twelve trained tradespeople to receive advanced business
11 assistance to enable them to either pivot their existing business or start a new
12 business that will expand the State’s ability to deploy renewable energy and
13 efficiency technologies to more homes and businesses across the State.

14 * * * Higher Education; Workforce Investments; Curricula Expansion * * *

15 Sec. 12. UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT; OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT;

16 APPROPRIATION

17 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
18 General Fund to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement, in
19 consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, for additional
20 forgivable loans of \$5,000.00 per graduate for recent college graduates across

1 all Vermont higher education institutions who commit to work in Vermont for
2 two years after graduation.

3 Sec. 13. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; RESTORATIVE
4 JUSTICE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to establish a bachelor of science
7 program in restorative justice at Vermont State University.

8 Sec. 14. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; VERMONT POLICE
9 ACADEMY; STUDY

10 On or before January 15, 2024, the Vermont Criminal Justice Council and
11 representatives of the Vermont State Colleges and other public and private
12 postsecondary institutions that offer a degree program in criminal justice shall
13 review, consider, and take steps necessary to standardize the curricula offered
14 and avoid redundant requirements for obtaining certification by prospective
15 criminal justice personnel and shall submit a report of its actions to the House
16 Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate
17 Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs.

18 Sec. 15. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CERTIFICATE IN 3-D
19 TECHNOLOGY; APPROPRIATION

20 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
21 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to establish a Certificate in 3-D

1 Technology program offered as a full-time, six-week, intensive residential
2 summer program at Vermont State University, which will:

3 (1) offer knowledge and hands-on experience that appeals to a wide
4 range of interests from science and engineering to the arts and humanities;

5 (2) position students for greater success in college and with an
6 employable edge upon completion;

7 (3) attract diverse types of learners from high schools and CTE centers;

8 (4) foster interest in STE(A)M with learners across different disciplines;

9 (5) leverage the latest 3-D technology available at the Advanced
10 Manufacturing Center; and

11 (6) build local and national awareness of the Vermont State College
12 System’s innovative, experiential learning methodology and technical
13 expertise.

14 Sec. 16. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CRITICAL OCCUPATIONS
15 SCHOLARSHIPS; APPROPRIATION

16 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,800,000.00 is appropriated from the
17 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to provide Critical Occupations
18 Scholarships for eligible students with a household income of \$75,000.00 or
19 less enrolled education programs that lead to a career in an occupation with
20 critical need, including early childhood occupations, clinical mental health

1 counseling, criminal justice occupations, dental hygienists, and all levels of
2 nursing.

3 Sec. 17. UPSKILL VERMONT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

4 APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to the University of Vermont to provide additional free classes
7 through the Upskill Vermont Scholarship Program for Vermont residents
8 seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance job skills.

9 * * * Vermont Trades Scholarship Program * * *

10 Sec. 18. VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

11 APPROPRIATION

12 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
13 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to provide
14 additional scholarships through the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program
15 created in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 14.

16 * * * Vermont Training Program * * *

17 Sec. 19. VERMONT TRAINING PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

18 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$5,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
19 General Fund to the Vermont Training Program to fulfill Vermont's obligation
20 to procure incentives in accordance with the Creating Helpful Incentives to
21 Produce Semiconductors for America (CHIPS) Act.

1 (a) As used in this section:

2 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
3 established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

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

6 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
7 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

8 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
9 tuition, which may also cover room, board, and the cost of required books and
10 supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

11 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse
12 Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created under this section.

13 (b) The Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable
14 Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the
15 Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program
16 provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in a master’s program at an
17 eligible school who commit to working as a psychiatric mental health nurse
18 practitioner in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in
19 subsection (d) of this section.

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

4 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
5 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
6 requirements:

7 (1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program, whether through in-
8 person or remote instruction, that leads to a master’s degree or specialty in
9 psychiatric mental health;

10 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
11 is enrolled;

12 (3) agree to work as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner in
13 Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of
14 forgivable loan awarded;

15 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
16 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
17 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
18 service required in subdivision (3) of this subsection;

19 (5) have completed the Program’s application form and the Free
20 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), in accordance with a schedule
21 determined by the Corporation; and

1 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
2 require.

3 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a psychiatric mental health
4 nurse practitioner in this State in compliance with the Program for a period that
5 would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the
6 individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in
7 consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall
8 receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant
9 to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the
10 individual at the time of entering the Program.

11 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
12 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
13 forgivable loan amounts.

14 Sec. 23. PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER

15 FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM;

16 APPROPRIATION

17 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
18 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont

1 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive

2 Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 39.

3 Sec. 24. EMS TRAINING; APPROPRIATION

4 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 General Fund to the Department of Health to provide training for emergency
6 medical services personnel.

7 Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
8 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024, the following amounts are appropriated for forgivable
10 loans for nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan
11 Incentive Program established in 18 V.S.A. § 34:

12 (1) the amount of \$3,000,000.00 in Global Commitment funds is
13 appropriated to the Department of Health for forgivable loans for nursing
14 students under the Program;

15 (2) the amount of \$1,304,400.00 is appropriated from the General Fund
16 to the Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
17 State match for the Program; and

18 (3) the amount of \$1,695,600.00 in federal funds is appropriated to the
19 Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
20 Program.

1 Sec. 26. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;

2 APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to provide one additional year
5 of funding for the classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce
6 Coordinator position created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of
7 Health Care Reform, pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 34(a).

8 Sec. 27. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED AND
9 SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

10 (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from
11 the General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the
12 designated and specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency's
13 proportion of full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff to the total number of FTE staff
14 across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide.

15 (b)(1) Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds
16 received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section available to its current and
17 prospective employees on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year service
18 obligation to work at a designated or specialized service agency in this State.

19 (2) The funds may be used for the following purposes:

20 (A) student loan repayment; and

21 (B) tuition assistance.

1 (3) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be in the form of
2 forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the employee’s completion of the
3 required service obligation.

4 (c) On or before March 1, 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall make
5 a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health
6 Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations
7 and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated in this section.

8 Sec. 28. 18 V.S.A. § 40 is added to read:

9 § 40. VERMONT DENTAL HYGIENIST FORGIVABLE LOAN

10 INCENTIVE PROGRAM

11 (a) As used in this section:

12 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
13 established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

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 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

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 at an eligible school.

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

3 (b) The Vermont Dental Hygienist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is
4 created and shall be administered by the Department of Health in collaboration
5 with the Corporation. The Program provides forgivable loans to students
6 enrolled in an eligible school who commit to working as a dental hygienist in
7 this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this
8 section.

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

12 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
13 whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following
14 requirements:

15 (1) be enrolled at a dental hygienist program at an eligible school;

16 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
17 is enrolled;

18 (3) agree to work as a dental hygienist in Vermont for a minimum of
19 one year following licensure for each year of forgivable loan awarded;

20 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
21 the individual’s forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to

1 subsection (g) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
2 service required in this subsection:

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

7 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
8 require.

9 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a dental hygienist in this State
10 for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit
11 received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by the
12 Corporation in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the
13 individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of
14 the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit agreement or
15 promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.

16 (f) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this
17 section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds
18 are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over
19 and shall be available to the Department of Health and the Corporation in the
20 following fiscal year to award additional forgivable loans as set forth in this
21 section.

1 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
2 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
3 forgivable loan amounts.

4 Sec. 28a. VERMONT DENTAL HYGIENIST FORGIVABLE LOAN
5 INCENTIVE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

6 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the
7 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont
8 Dental Hygienist Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 18 V.S.A.
9 § 40.

10 * * * Economic Development; Technical Assistance * * *

11 Sec. 29. 10 V.S.A. § 2 is added to read:

12 § 2. SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE

13 (a) There is created the Small Business Technical Assistance Exchange, a
14 business assistance program through which the regional development
15 corporations shall provide small- and mid-sized businesses with professional
16 and technical assistance:

17 (1) through in-house Business Navigators;

18 (2) through partnerships with organizations specializing in outreach to
19 mature workers, youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been
20 involved with the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color

1 Vermonters, New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations;

2 and

3 (3) through grants to private providers for professional services,

4 including:

5 (A) business operations, financial management, and grant writing;

6 (B) digital strategies;

7 (C) architecture and physical space design;

8 (D) reconfiguring manufacturing equipment and processes and

9 incorporating safety measures;

10 (E) technology and software consulting;

11 (F) legal and other professional services; and

12 (G) other technical assistance.

13 (b)(1) Through the Exchange, the regional development corporations shall
14 maintain a directory of, and build connections to, Vermont technical assistance
15 providers who have demonstrated the ability and expertise to assist businesses
16 with critical tools to grow and adapt their businesses to the ever-changing
17 business climate.

18 (2) The Exchange shall award technical assistance grants of not more
19 than \$5,000.00 per business for technical services from approved providers.

20 (3) To be eligible to receive technical assistance through the Exchange,
21 a business:

1 (A) must be a for-profit entity located in Vermont; and

2 (B) must have at least \$5,000.00 in average annual revenue.

3 (4) A business whose owner’s income is higher than the federal labor
4 market area in which the business operates, as evidenced by a self-attestation
5 provided by the owner, shall provide a 50 percent match for the costs of
6 professional services funded by a grant.

7 (c) The regional development corporations shall:

8 (1) operate the Exchange to produce benefits for both the client
9 companies as well as the vendors providing the assistance;

10 (2) conduct outreach and direct engagement to promote participation by
11 businesses in rural areas of this State and businesses owned by mature workers,
12 youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been involved with
13 the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters,
14 New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations; and

15 (3) supporting businesses in anticipating and addressing changing
16 workforce needs and availability through creative solutions, including split
17 shifts, shorter workweeks, and cross training.

18 (d) The regional development corporations shall publish a report on the
19 activities and performance of the Exchange on or before January 15 and July
20 15 each year.

21 Sec. 30. RURAL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE;

1 APPROPRIATION

2 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from the
3 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
4 subgrant to provide services and assistance through the Small Business
5 Technical Assistance Exchange created in 10 V.S.A. § 2.

6 * * * Economic Development; Vermont Arts Council * * *

7 Sec. 31. VERMONT ARTS COUNCIL; APPROPRIATION

8 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$72,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 General Fund to the Vermont Arts Council to provide a State match for
10 National Endowment for the Arts funding to enable the Council to continue its
11 work boosting the creative economy in Vermont.

12 * * * Brownfields * * *

13 Sec. 32. BROWNFIELDS FUNDING; USE IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

14 The Department of Economic Development shall use the \$10,000,000.00
15 appropriated in fiscal year 2024 for brownfields redevelopment for the
16 remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites to be used in the same
17 manner as the Brownfields Revitalization Fund established by 10 V.S.A.
18 § 6654 except, notwithstanding the grant limitations in 10 V.S.A. § 6654,
19 projects supported by this appropriation shall not be limited to a maximum
20 amount per site. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development
21 shall award the amount of \$1,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2024 to regional

1 planning commissions for the purposes of brownfields assessment. In
2 awarding funds under this section, the Secretary, in consultation with VAPDA,
3 shall select one regional planning commission to administer these funds. To
4 ensure statewide availability, the selected regional planning commission shall
5 subgrant to regional planning commissions with brownfield programs, with not
6 more than 10 percent of the funds being used for administrative purposes.

7 Sec. 33. 10 V.S.A. § 6654(e) is amended to read:

8 (e) A grant may be awarded by the Secretary of Commerce and
9 Community Development with the approval of the Secretary of Natural
10 Resources, provided that:

11 (1) A grant may not exceed \$50,000.00 for characterization and
12 assessment of a site.

13 (2) A grant may not exceed ~~\$200,000.00~~ \$500,000.00 for remediation of
14 a site.

15 (3) A grant may be used by an applicant to purchase environmental
16 insurance relating to the performance of the characterization, assessment, or
17 remediation of a Brownfield site in accordance with a corrective action plan
18 approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

19 (4) Financial assistance may be provided to applicants by developing a
20 risk sharing pool, an indemnity pool, or other insurance mechanism designed
21 to help applicants.

1 (III) the employer attests to the Agency that, after reasonable
2 time and effort, the employer was unable to fill the employee’s position from
3 among Vermont applicants; or

4 (ii) ~~on or after February 1, 2022~~ the individual is a new remote
5 employee who meets the following criteria:

6 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State; and

7 (II) the individual is a full-time employee of an out-of-state
8 business and performs the majority of ~~his or her~~ the employee’s employment
9 duties remotely from a home office or a co-working space located in this State.

10 (B) The individual receives gross salary or wages that equal or
11 exceed the Vermont livable wage rate calculated pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526.

12 (C) The individual is subject to Vermont income tax.

13 * * * Economic Development;

14 Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant Program * * *

15 Sec. 35. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.18, as amended by 2022 Acts

16 and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 46, is further amended to read:

17 Sec. H.18. COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND REVITALIZATION

18 GRANT PROGRAM

19 * * *

20 (b) Eligible applicants.

21 * * *

1 (3) The following are ineligible to apply for a grant:

2 (A) a State or local government-operated business, except when a
3 municipality applies for a grant for a privately-operated business providing
4 public water supply or wastewater treatment services to the municipality;

5 (B) a business that, together with any affiliated business, owns or
6 operates more than 20 locations, regardless of whether those locations do
7 business under the same name or within the same industry; and

8 (C) a publicly traded company.

9 * * *

10 * * * Rural Industry Development Grant Fund * * *

11 Sec. 36. 10 V.S.A. § 6 is added to read:

12 § 6. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

13 (a) Creation; purpose.

14 (1) A Rural Industry Development Grant Program is created within the
15 Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide grant funding
16 through local development corporations for business relocation and expansion
17 efforts, including the purchase, demolition, and renovation of property for
18 industrial use.

19 (2)(A) There is established a Rural Industry Development Special Fund
20 comprising amounts appropriated to the Fund, contributions from other

1 sources, and the return of principal from the sale of any property invested
2 through the Program.

3 (B) Monies in the Fund shall be available to Agency to make grants
4 through the Program to assist local development corporations with business
5 relocation and expansion efforts throughout Vermont.

6 (C) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, interest
7 earned and any remaining balance at the end of the fiscal year shall be retained
8 by the Fund and carried forward in the Fund.

9 (b) Grant considerations. In making grant awards, the Agency shall
10 consider:

11 (1) the real estate needs of growing and relocating businesses, including
12 nonprofit organizations, in the applicant's region;

13 (2) the ability of the proposed project to meet the site-specific needs of
14 businesses considering whether to expand or locate in this State;

15 (3) the funding that the applicant has identified, or secured, to leverage a
16 grant award; and

17 (4) the readiness of an applicant to move a project forward.

18 (c) Eligible applicants; priority.

19 (1) To be eligible for a grant, an applicant must be a local development
20 corporation, as defined in subdivision 212(10) of this title, located within this
21 State.

1 (2) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development may
2 designate projects and agreements as first priority based on rural communities
3 that continue to experience insufficient economic and grand list growth.

4 (d) Eligible activities. A grant recipient may use funding for the following:

5 (1) to purchase land for potential industrial use;

6 (2) for the costs of site development, permitting, or providing
7 infrastructure for property the recipient owns;

8 (3) for the equity investment required for a loan transaction through the
9 Vermont Economic Development Authority under 10 V.S.A. chapter 12,
10 subchapter 3; or

11 (4) for the matching requirement of another State or federal grant
12 consistent with this section.

13 (e) Application; market assessment.

14 (1) An applicant shall include in its application a local and regional
15 market assessment that demonstrates reasonable need for the proposed
16 development and identifies imminent, potential, or existing business growth
17 opportunities.

18 (2) An applicant shall submit the following to demonstrate a readiness to
19 begin and complete the proposed project:

20 (A) community and regional support for the project;

21 (B) that grant funding is needed to complete the proposed project;

1 (C) an ability to manage the project, with requisite experience and a
2 plan for fiscal viability; and

3 (D) a description of the permitting required to proceed with the
4 project and a plan for obtaining the permits.

5 (f) Awards; amount.

6 (1) An award shall not exceed the lesser of \$1,000,000 or 20 percent of
7 the total project cost.

8 (2) A recipient may combine grant funds with funding from other
9 sources.

10 (3) The Agency shall release grant funds upon determining that the
11 applicant has met all application conditions and requirements.

12 (4) A grant recipient may apply for additional grant funds if future
13 amounts are appropriated for the Program and the funds are for a separate but
14 eligible use.

15 (g) Deed restrictions; property sales. The Agency shall include deed
16 restrictions that require the return of the principal amount of the grant to the
17 Special Fund and may require the payment of a percentage of the sales profit.

18 Sec. 37. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUND;

19 APPROPRIATION

1 other publicly accessible buildings and connecting spaces such as sidewalks,
2 streets, alleys, and trails.

3 (d)(1) The Department of Housing and Community Development shall
4 establish an application process, eligibility criteria, and criteria for prioritizing
5 assistance for awarding grants through the Program.

6 (2) The Department may award a grant to a municipality, a nonprofit
7 organization, or a community group with a fiscal sponsor for a project that is
8 located in or serves a designated downtown, village center, new town center, or
9 neighborhood development area that will create a new public space or
10 revitalize or activate an existing public space.

11 (3) The Department may award a grant to not more than ~~one project~~
12 three projects per calendar year within a municipality.

13 (4) The minimum amount of a grant award is \$5,000.00, and the
14 maximum amount of a grant award is \$40,000.00.

15 (5) The Department shall develop matching grant eligibility
16 requirements to ensure a broad base of community and financial support for
17 the project, subject to the following:

18 (A) A project shall include in-kind support and matching funds raised
19 through a crowdfunding approach that includes multiple donors.

20 (B) An applicant may not donate to its own crowdfunding campaign.

1 (C) A donor may not contribute more than \$10,000.00 or 35 percent
2 of the campaign goal, whichever is less.

3 (D) An applicant shall provide matching funds raised through
4 crowdfunding of not less than 33 percent of the grant award.

5 (e) The Department of Housing and Community Development, with the
6 assistance of a fiscal agent, shall distribute funds under this section in a manner
7 that provides funding for projects of various sizes in as many geographical
8 areas of the State as possible.

9 (f) The Department of Housing and Community Development may use up
10 to 15 percent of any appropriation to the Fund from the General Fund to assist
11 with crowdfunding, administration, training, and technological needs of the
12 Program.

13 * * * Downtown Development * * *

14 Sec. 39. 24 V.S.A. § 2792(d) is amended to read:

15 (d) The Department shall provide staff and administrative support to the
16 State Board, ~~and~~ shall produce guidelines to direct municipalities seeking to
17 obtain designation under this chapter, and shall pay per diem compensation for
18 board members pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b).

19 Sec. 40. 24 V.S.A. § 2793(b) is amended to read:

20 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
21 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed

1 application, the State Board shall designate a downtown development district if
2 the State Board finds in its written decision that the municipality has:

3 * * *

4 Sec. 41. 24 V.S.A. § 2793a(b) is amended to read:

5 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
6 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
7 application, the State Board shall designate a village center if the State Board
8 finds the applicant has met the requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

9 Sec. 42. 24 V.S.A. § 2793b(b) is amended to read:

10 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
11 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
12 application, the State Board shall designate a new town center development
13 district if the State Board finds, with respect to that district, the municipality
14 has:

15 * * *

16 Sec. 43. 24 V.S.A. § 2793e(d) is amended to read:

17 (d) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
18 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
19 application, for designation of a neighborhood development area, the State
20 Board, after opportunity for public comment, shall approve a neighborhood

1 development area if the Board determines that the applicant has met the
2 requirements of this section.

3 * * * Secretary of State; One-Stop Portal * * *

4 Sec. 44. 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 196, Sec. 1, as amended by 2019 Acts
5 and Resolves No. 80, Sec. 13, is further amended to read:

6 Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

7 (a) The Secretary of ~~State~~ Digital Services shall serve as the chair of a
8 steering committee, composed of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of
9 Commerce and Community Development, the Secretary of Administration,
10 and the Secretary of Digital Services or their designees.

11 (b) ~~The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the~~ steering committee,
12 and in collaboration with other State agencies and departments and interested
13 stakeholders ~~as necessary~~, shall:

14 (1) review and consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps
15 to enhance the Secretary of State's one-stop business portal for businesses,
16 entrepreneurs, and citizens to provide information about starting and operating
17 a business in Vermont; and

18 (2) submit on or before December 15, ~~2019~~ 2023:

19 (A) a design proposal that includes a project scope, timeline,
20 roadmap, and cost projections;

1 (B) any statutory or regulatory changes needed to implement the
2 proposal; and

3 (C) a sustainable funding model for the portal.

4 (c) The steering committee shall evaluate the cost and efficacy, and
5 integrate into the current one-stop portal to the extent feasible, features that:

6 (1) enhance State websites to simplify registrations and provide a ~~clear~~
7 comprehensive, one-stop compilation of other State business requirements,
8 including permits and licenses;

9 (2) implement a data collection component that offers the registrant the
10 option to self-identify, and make available to the public through the business
11 search function, demographic information concerning ownership of the
12 business, including whether the business is woman-owned, veteran-owned,
13 BIPOC-owned, LGBTQ-owned, or minority-owned;

14 (3) simplify the mechanism for making payments to the State by
15 allowing a person to pay amounts ~~he or she~~ the person owes to the State for
16 taxes, fees, or other charges to a single recipient within State government;

17 (3)(4) simplify annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make
18 a single filing to a single recipient within State government and check a box if
19 nothing substantive has changed from the prior year;

20 (4)(5) provide guidance, assistance with navigation, and other support to
21 persons who are forming or operating a small business;

1 ~~(5)~~(6) after registration, provide information about additional and
2 ongoing State requirements and a point of contact to discuss questions or
3 explore any assistance needed;

4 ~~(6)~~(7) provide guidance and information about State and federal
5 programs and initiatives, as well as State partner organizations and Vermont-
6 based businesses of interest; and

7 ~~(7)~~(8) map communication channels for project updates, including
8 digital channels such as e-mail, social media, and other communications.

9 (d) All State agencies and departments shall designate a single employee or
10 team of employees who are charged with the duty to provide assistance to the
11 steering committee upon its request.

12 (e) The steering committee shall focus its review on providing services
13 through the one-stop business portal primarily for the benefit of businesses
14 with 20 or fewer employees.

15 (f) The Agency of Digital Services shall assign a project manager or
16 business analyst to report directly to the Secretary of State to assist with the
17 implementation of this act through June 30, ~~2020~~ 2025 for the purpose of
18 developing and implementing a one-stop navigable portal for businesses,
19 entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting a business in
20 Vermont, and to provide ongoing support to businesses interfacing with State
21 government.

1 Sec. 45. 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 51a is amended to read:

2 Sec. 51a. COVID-19-RELATED PAID LEAVE GRANT PROGRAM

3 (a) Establishment and appropriation.

4 (1) There is established in the Department of Financial Regulation the
5 COVID-19-Related Paid Leave Grant Program to administer and award grants
6 to employers to reimburse the cost of providing COVID-19-related paid leave
7 to employees as provided in subsection (e) of this section.

8 (2) The sum of ~~\$15,180,000.00~~ \$5,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
10 Funds to the Department of Financial Regulation for fiscal years 2023 and
11 2024 for the provision of grants to reimburse employers for the cost of
12 providing COVID-19-related paid leave. ~~Not more than seven percent of the~~
13 ~~amount appropriated pursuant to this subdivision may be used for expenses~~
14 ~~related to Program administration and outreach.~~

15 * * *

16 (c) Grant program.

17 * * *

18 (3)(A) Employers may submit applications for grants during the period
19 beginning on October 1, 2022 and ending on September 30, 2023 and may
20 submit an application not more than once each calendar quarter during that
21 period. Grant applications shall be submitted for paid leave provided during

1 the preceding calendar quarter and, subject to subdivision (B) of this
2 subdivision (3), for calendar quarters in the program period prior to the
3 preceding calendar quarter.

4 (B) An employer shall be permitted to request grant funds for costs
5 related to COVID-19-related paid leave described in subsection (e) of this
6 section in a calendar quarter prior to the preceding calendar quarter if:

7 (i) the employer has not already received grant funds in relation to
8 the COVID-19-related leave; and

9 (ii) the costs of the COVID-19-related leave are eligible for a
10 grant pursuant to the provisions of this section and any applicable federal
11 requirements.

12 (4) An employer may combine grant funds with funding from other
13 sources but shall not use grant funds from multiple sources for the same
14 instance of paid leave provided to its employees for COVID-19-related
15 reasons. As used in this subdivision, an “instance” means a calendar day in
16 which the employee was absent from work for a COVID-19-related reason.

17 * * *

18 (6) Grants shall be awarded to eligible employers on a first-come, first-
19 served basis, subject to available funding.

20 * * *

21 (e) Amount of grants.

1 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023, except that Sec. 45 (COVID-19
2 paid leave) shall take effect on passage.

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 (Committee vote: _____)

10

11

Representative _____

12

FOR THE COMMITTEE