

H.777

Introduced by Representatives Brady of Williston, Carris Duncan of

Whitingham, Graning of Jericho, Harple of Glover, Holcombe

of Norwich, and Priestley of Bradford

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Economic development; ski academies; special fund; education

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the

Vermont Skier Development Scholarship Fund, to be administered by the

Agency of Commerce and Community Development, to fund up to 20

scholarships for selected Vermont skiers and snowboarders to attend eligible

Vermont ski academies. The bill also proposes to prohibit school districts

from paying tuition under 16 V.S.A. chapter 21 for students to attend Vermont

ski academies. The Special Fund would be funded by the amount of sales and

use tax necessary to fund 20 scholarships at a rate of \$25,000.00 per

scholarship, increased annually by an inflator.

An act relating to the Vermont Skier Development Scholarship Fund and  
Scholarship Program

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

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

3 Subchapter 6. Vermont Skier Development Fund

4 § 2871. VERMONT SKIER DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND AND  
5 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

6 (a) Special fund.

7 (1) Pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, there is established a  
8 special fund to be known as the Vermont Skier Development Scholarship  
9 Fund, which shall be used for the purpose of funding scholarships for up to 20  
10 sponsored Vermont skiers and snowboarders to attend eligible Vermont ski  
11 academies.

12 (2) The Fund shall be established and held separate and apart from any  
13 other funds or monies of the State and shall be used and administered  
14 exclusively for the purpose of this section and for necessary costs incurred in  
15 administering the Fund. The money in the Fund shall be invested in the same  
16 manner as permitted for the investment of funds belonging to the State or held  
17 in the Treasury. The Fund shall consist of any combination of the following:

18 (A) sales and use tax in the amount specified in 32 V.S.A. § 9714;

19 (B) such sums as may be appropriated or transferred thereto from  
20 time to time by the General Assembly, the State Emergency Board, or the Joint  
21 Fiscal Committee during such times as the General Assembly is not in session;

1           (C) all interest earned from the investment of Fund balances; and

2           (D) any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit  
3 of the Fund.

4           (3) The Fund shall be administered by the Agency of Commerce and  
5 Community Development pursuant to subdivision (b)(5) of this section.

6           (4) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall  
7 administer awards in such a way as to comply with the requirements of the  
8 Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S.C. § 108(f).

9           (b) Vermont Skier Development Scholarship Program.

10           (1) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall  
11 establish a scholarship program to facilitate the payment of scholarships from  
12 the Vermont Skier Development Scholarship Fund to eligible Vermont ski  
13 academies on behalf of up to 20 sponsored Vermont skiers and snowboarders  
14 accepted for enrollment in the eligible ski academy of their choice.

15           (2)(A) Eligible scholarship recipients shall:

16                   (i) have completed eighth grade in either a Vermont public school  
17 or in an approved independent school to which the student's district of  
18 residence paid publicly funded tuition on behalf of the student pursuant to 16  
19 V.S.A. chapter 21; and

20                   (ii) be enrolled in grades nine, 10, 11, or 12.

1           (B) In order to retain a scholarship in subsequent academic years, a  
2           scholarship recipient shall meet the following criteria:

3                   (i) evidence of athletic progress, which shall be demonstrated by:

4                           (I) improved or sustained competitive standing;

5                           (II) minimum training and competition participation thresholds;

6           and

7                   (III) an independent annual performance review panel  
8           comprised of nonacademy reviewers;

9                   (ii) satisfactory academic progress, attendance compliance, and  
10           code of conduct adherence;

11                   (iii) compliance with injury reporting and return-to-sport  
12           protocols, as well as conditioning and safety training participation; and

13                   (iv) Vermont engagement, which shall be demonstrated by:

14                           (I) annual service contributions; and

15                           (II) maintenance of Vermont affiliation unless such affiliation  
16           is waived for national team placement.

17           (3) Eligible ski academies shall meet the following criteria:

18                   (A) student support and equity, which shall include:

19                           (i) a demonstrated capacity to serve students with disabilities and  
20           students with mental health and injury recovery needs;

1                   (ii) access to certified special educators or learning support staff;

2       and

3                   (iii) compliance with State and federal nondiscrimination laws;

4                   (B) transparency and financial accountability, which shall include

5       audited tuition and fee schedules;

6                   (C) academic integrity, which shall include:

7                   (i) an accredited academic program or approved partner;

8                   (ii) verified graduation and postsecondary placement data; and

9                   (iii) academic credit transferability to Vermont public schools;

10                  (D) athletic program quality, which shall include:

11                  (i) certified coaching staff;

12                  (ii) athlete-to-coach ratio caps; and

13                  (iii) safety and risk-management protocols; and

14                  (E) data sharing and evaluation, which shall include:

15                  (i) participation in statewide longitudinal tracking;

16                  (ii) consent to independent evaluation of outcomes; and

17                  (iii) annual public reporting of data to the Agency of Commerce

18       and Community Development.

19                  (4) The Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall adopt

20       rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to define selection prioritization criteria

1 and requirements in accordance with this subdivision. The rules shall use the  
2 following criteria to evaluate selection prioritization:

3 (A) athletic performance and trajectory, including:

4 (i) the measurement of potential objective results such as U.S. Ski  
5 Team or International Ski and Snowboard Federation points; Bill Koch Youth  
6 Ski League rankings; or race finishes adjusted for field strength;

7 (ii) coach-verified progression, which shall include a documented  
8 improvement curve using technical benchmarks and training data; and

9 (iii) multidiscipline versatility, such as Alpine and Nordic skiing  
10 crossover and speed and technical balance;

11 (B) Vermont connection and public return, which shall include a  
12 demonstrated commitment to compete under Vermont affiliation or contribute  
13 to Vermont's ski economy through instruction, racing, patrol, or guiding;

14 (C) commitment, coachability, and durability, which shall include an  
15 analysis of a potential recipient's attendance and training consistency, coach  
16 evaluations using standardized rubrics, and injury resilience plan; and

17 (D) academic readiness, which shall be demonstrated by evidence  
18 that a potential recipient can meet academic requirements with support and a  
19 clear plan to address learning differences.

1           (5) The Agency shall administer the Scholarship Program as follows:

2           (A) The Program shall fund up to 20 scholarships to Vermont ski  
3           academies for sponsored Vermont skiers and snowboarders accepted for  
4           enrollment in the eligible ski academy of their choice.

5           (B) The Agency may use up to \$25,000.00 for administrative costs  
6           and marketing.

7           (C) To ensure support for competitive adaptive skiers, the Agency  
8           may prioritize the award of up to three scholarships to Vermont adaptive  
9           skiers.

10          (c) Annually on or before January 15, the Agency shall report to the House  
11          Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate  
12          Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs the  
13          following data, which shall be used to evaluate Program effectiveness and  
14          return on investment:

15           (1) talent pipeline outcomes, which shall include:

16           (A) the percentage of scholarship recipients reaching the U.S. Ski  
17           Team or Development Team; National Collegiate Athletic Association ski  
18           programs; or professional or semiprofessional competition; and

19           (B) the median improvement in U.S. Ski Team or International Ski  
20           and Snowboard Federation points compared to evenly matched nonscholarship  
21           peers;

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 822 is amended to read:

§ 822. SCHOOL DISTRICT TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS OR  
PAY TUITION

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1 (C) is located within ~~either:~~

2 (i) a supervisory district that does not operate a public school for  
3 some or all grades as of July 1, 2024; ~~or~~

4 (ii) ~~a supervisory union with one or more member school districts~~  
5 ~~that does not operate a public school for some or all grades as of July 1, 2024;~~

6 (D) had at least ~~25~~ 70 percent of its student enrollment composed of  
7 students attending on a district-funded tuition basis pursuant to chapter 21 of  
8 this title during the 2023–2024 school year; ~~and~~

9 (E) complies with the minimum class size requirements contained in  
10 subdivision 165(a)(9) of this title and State Board rule; ~~provided, however, that~~  
11 ~~if a school is unable to comply with the class size minimum standards due to~~  
12 ~~geographic isolation or a school has developed an implementation plan to meet~~  
13 ~~the class size minimum requirements, the school may ask the State Board to~~  
14 ~~grant it a waiver from this subdivision (E), which decision shall be final;~~

15 (F) meets education quality standards; and

16 (G) publicly reports assessment and demographic data in the same  
17 manner as public schools publicly report the same data;

18 (3) an independent school meeting education quality standards, other  
19 than a Vermont ski academy;

20 (4) a tutorial program approved by the State Board;

8 \* \* \*

(d) As used in this section, “therapeutic approved independent school” means an approved independent school that limits enrollment for publicly funded students residing in Vermont to students who are on an individualized education program or plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, or who are enrolled pursuant to a written agreement between a local education agency and the school or pursuant to a court order.

[Repealed.]

16        Sec. 5. 32 V.S.A. § 9714 is added to read:

17        § 9714. SALES AND USE TAX REVENUE; VERMONT SKIER

18 DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

19           Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025, \$525,000.00 in revenue from the sales  
20           and use tax imposed by chapter 233 of this title shall be deposited annually  
21           into the Skier Development Scholarship Fund established pursuant to 16

1 V.S.A. § 2871. This amount shall be adjusted for inflation by the National  
2 Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) implicit price deflator for state and local  
3 government consumption expenditures and gross investment published by the  
4 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, annually on or  
5 before November 15 from fiscal year 2026 through the fiscal year for which  
6 the amount is being determined, and rounding upward to the nearest whole  
7 dollar amount.

8 Sec. 6. PROSPECTIVE REPEAL OF THE VERMONT SKIER

9 DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND AND PROGRAM

10 The following are repealed on July 1, 2031:

11 (1) 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 6 (Vermont Skier Development  
12 Scholarship Fund and Program);

13 (2) 32 V.S.A. § 9714 (sales and use tax revenue; Vermont Skier  
14 Development Scholarship Fund);

15 (3) 16 V.S.A. § 822(d) (maintenance of public high schools; prohibition  
16 on paying tuition to ski academies); and

17 (4) 16 V.S.A. § 824(d) (high school tuition; prohibition on paying  
18 tuition to ski academies).

19 Sec. 7. TRANSFER

20 Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025, on or before July 15, 2026, the  
21 Commissioner of Finance and Management shall transfer \$525,000.00 from

1     the Education Fund to the Vermont Skier Development Scholarship Fund  
2     established pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 2871.

3     Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

4     This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.