

1 H.777

2 Introduced by Representatives Brady of Williston, Carris Duncan of

3 Whitingham, Graning of Jericho, Harple of Glover, Holcombe

4 of Norwich, and Priestley of Bradford

5 Referred to Committee on

6 Date:

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

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

9 Vermont Skier Development Scholarship Fund, to be administered by the

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

11 scholarships for selected Vermont skiers and snowboarders to attend eligible

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

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

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

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

16 scholarship, increased annually by an inflator.

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

18 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

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

**5      audited tuition and fee schedules;**

6 (C) academic integrity, which shall include:

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

11 (i) certified coaching staff;

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

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

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 Co

## 18 and Community Development.

19 (4) The Agency of Com

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;

1                   (2) Vermont economic impact, including:

2                   (A) post-Program in-state economic participation, such as coaching,  
3                   instruction, guiding, patrol, or racing administration;  
4                   (B) estimated lifetime earnings retained in Vermont; and  
5                   (C) seasonal employment fill rates in ski industry roles;

6                   (3) access and equity metrics, including:

7                   (A) geographic distribution, such as percentage of scholarship  
8                   recipients from rural towns compared to ski resort-adjacent towns;  
9                   (B) first-generation competitive skiers;  
10                   (C) successful participation by students with disabilities; and  
11                   (D) representation of economically disadvantaged students in the  
12                   pipeline; and

13                   (4) cost effectiveness, including:

14                   (A) the cost per scholarship recipient reaching predefined milestones;  
15                   (B) cost per retained Vermont ski-industry worker; and  
16                   (C) a comparison of Program costs to tuition being paid by Vermont  
17                   residents to out-of-state ski academies.

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

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

21                   \* \* \*

7 Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 824 is amended to read:

8        § 824. HIGH SCHOOL TUITION

9 \* \* \*

10        (d) A school board shall be prohibited from paying tuition under this  
11        section to a Vermont ski academy.

12 Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 828 is amended to read:

13      § 828. TUITION TO APPROVED SCHOOLS; AGE; APPEAL

14 (a) A school district shall not pay the tuition of a student except to:

15 (1) a public school located in Vermont;

(2) an approved independent school, other than a Vermont ski academy,

17 that:

18 (A) is located in Vermont;

(B) is approved under section 166 of this title on or before July 1,

20 2025;

1 (C) is located within either:

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

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 \* \* \*

9 (d) As used in this section, “therapeutic approved independent school”

10 means an approved independent school that limits enrollment for publicly

11 funded students residing in Vermont to students who are on an individualized

12 education program or plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of

13 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, or who are enrolled pursuant to a written agreement

14 between a local education agency and the school or pursuant to a court order.

15 [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.