

Senate proposal of amendment

H. 931

An act relating to miscellaneous changes in education law.

The Senate proposes to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Approved Independent School Moratorium * * *

Sec. 1. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. E.511.1, as amended by 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 72, Sec. 16, is amended to read:

Sec. E.511.1 MORATORIUM ON APPROVAL OF NEW APPROVED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the State Board of Education shall be prohibited from approving an application for initial approval of an approved independent school until further direction by the General Assembly.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a change in either tax status or conversion to a nonprofit organization by a therapeutic approved independent school, absent any other changes, shall not affect the approval status of the school.

(c) Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (b) of this section, the moratorium on approval of new approved independent schools shall not apply to changes in ownership of therapeutic approved independent schools as that term is defined in 16 V.S.A. § 828(d). If submission of an application for initial approval of an approved independent school is required as the result of a change in ownership of a therapeutic approved independent school that at the time of the change in ownership is approved by the State Board of Education pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 166, and the school will remain a therapeutic approved independent school after the change in ownership is complete, the moratorium created pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall not apply and the Agency of Education and State Board of Education shall process the application according to applicable State and federal law.

* * * Interstate Compact for Education * * *

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. chapter 35 is added to read:

CHAPTER 35. INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR EDUCATION

§ 1501. PURPOSE AND POLICY—ARTICLE I

(a) It is the purpose of this compact to:

(1) establish and maintain close cooperation and understanding among executive, legislative, professional educational, and lay leadership on a nationwide basis at the state and local levels;

(2) provide a forum for the discussion, development, crystallization, and recommendation of public policy alternatives in the field of education;

(3) provide a clearinghouse of information on matters relating to education problems and how they are being met in different places throughout the nation, so that the executive and legislative branches of state government and of local communities may have ready access to the experience and record of the entire country, and so that both lay and professional groups in the field of education may have additional avenues for the sharing of experience and the interchange of ideas in the formation of public policy in education;

(4) facilitate the improvement of state and local education systems so that all of them will be able to meet adequate and desirable goals in a society that requires continuous qualitative and quantitative advance in educational opportunities, methods, and facilities.

(b) It is the policy of this compact to encourage and promote local and state initiative in the development, maintenance, improvement, and administration of education systems and institutions in a manner that will accord with the needs and advantages of diversity among localities and states.

(c) The party states recognize that each of them has an interest in the quality and quantity of education furnished in each of the other states, as well as in the excellence of its own education systems and institutions, because of the highly mobile character of individuals within the nation, and because the products and services contributing to the health, welfare, and economic advancement of each state are supplied in significant part by persons educated in other states.

§ 1502. STATE DEFINED—ARTICLE II

As used in this compact, “state” means a state, territory, or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

§ 1503. THE COMMISSION—ARTICLE III

(a) The Education Commission of the States, hereinafter called “the Commission,” is hereby established. The Commission shall consist of seven members representing each party state. One of such members shall be the governor; two shall be members of the state legislature selected by its respective houses and serving in such manner as the legislature may determine; and four shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor, unless the laws of the state otherwise provide. If the laws of a state prevent legislators from serving on the Commission, six members shall be appointed and serve at the pleasure of the governor, unless the laws of the state otherwise

provide. In addition to any other principles or requirements which a state may establish for the appointment and service of its members of the Commission, the guiding principle for the composition of the membership on the Commission from each party state shall be that the members representing such state shall, by virtue of their training, experience, knowledge, or affiliations, be in a position collectively to reflect broadly the interests of the state government, higher education, the state education system, local education, and lay and professional, public and nonpublic educational leadership. Of those appointees, one shall be the head of a state agency or institution, designated by the governor, having responsibility for one or more programs of public education. In addition to the members of the Commission representing the party states, there may be not to exceed 10 nonvoting commissioners selected by the Steering Committee for terms of one year. Such commissioners shall represent leading national organizations of professional educators or persons concerned with educational administration.

(b) The members of the Commission shall be entitled to one vote each on the Commission. No action of the Commission shall be binding unless taken at a meeting at which a majority of the total number of votes on the Commission are cast in favor thereof. Action of the Commission shall be only at a meeting at which a majority of the commissioners are present. The Commission shall meet at least once a year. In its bylaws, and subject to such directions and limitations as may be contained therein, the Commission may delegate the exercise of any of its powers to the Steering Committee or the Executive Director, except for the power to approve budgets or requests for appropriations, the power to make policy recommendations pursuant to section 1504 of this chapter, and adoption of the annual report pursuant to subsection (j) of this section.

(c) The Commission shall have a seal.

(d) The Commission shall elect annually, from among its members, a chairman, who shall be a governor; a vice chairman; and a treasurer. The Commission shall provide for the appointment of an Executive Director. Such Executive Director shall serve at the pleasure of the Commission, and together with the Treasurer and such other personnel as the Commission may deem appropriate shall be bonded in such amount as the Commission shall determine. The Executive Director shall be Secretary.

(e) Irrespective of the civil service, personnel, or other merit system laws of any of the party states, the Executive Director, subject to the approval of the Steering Committee, shall appoint, remove, or discharge such personnel as may be necessary for the performance of the functions of the Commission and shall fix the duties and compensation of such personnel. The Commission in its bylaws shall provide for the personnel policies and programs of the Commission.

(f) The Commission may borrow, accept, or contract for the services of personnel from any party jurisdiction, the United States or any subdivision or agency of the aforementioned governments, or from any agency of two or more of the party jurisdictions or their subdivisions.

(g) The Commission may accept for any of its purposes and functions under this compact any and all donations and grants of money, equipment, supplies, materials, and services, conditional or otherwise, from any state, the United States, or any other governmental agency, or from any person, firm, association, foundation or corporation, and may receive, utilize, and dispose of the same. Any donation or grant accepted by the Commission pursuant to this subsection or services borrowed pursuant to subsection (f) of this section shall be reported in the annual report of the Commission. Such report shall include the nature, amount, and conditions, if any, of the donation, grant, or services borrowed, and the identity of the donor or lender.

(h) The Commission may establish and maintain such facilities as may be necessary for the transacting of its business. The Commission may acquire, hold, and convey real and personal property and any interest therein.

(i) The Commission shall adopt bylaws for the conduct of its business and shall have the power to amend and rescind these bylaws. The Commission shall publish its bylaws in convenient form and shall file a copy thereof and a copy of any amendment thereto with the appropriate agency or officer in each of the party states.

(j) The Commission annually shall make to the governor and legislature of each party state a report covering the activities of the Commission for the preceding year. The Commission may make such additional reports as it may deem desirable.

§ 1504. POWERS—ARTICLE IV

In addition to authority conferred on the Commission by other provisions of the Compact, the Commission shall have authority to:

(1) collect, correlate, analyze, and interpret information and data concerning educational needs and resources;

(2) encourage and foster research in all aspects of education, but with special reference to the desirable scope of instruction, organization, administration, and instructional methods and standards employed or suitable for employment in public education systems;

(3) develop proposals for adequate financing of education as a whole and at each of its many levels;

(4) conduct or participate in research of the types referred to in this section in any instance where the Commission finds that such research is

necessary for the advancement of the purposes and policies of this compact, using fully the resources of national associations, regional compact organizations for higher education, and other agencies and institutions, both public and private;

(5) formulate suggested policies and plans for the improvement of public education as a whole, or for any segment thereof, and make recommendations with respect thereto available to the appropriate governmental units, agencies, and public officials;

(6) do such other things as may be necessary or incidental to the administration of any of its authority or functions pursuant to this compact.

§ 1505. COOPERATION WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT—ARTICLE V

(a) If the laws of the United States specifically so provide, or if administrative provision is made therefore within the federal government, the United States may be represented on the Commission by not to exceed 10 representatives. Any such representative or representatives of the United States shall be appointed and serve in such manner as may be provided by or pursuant to federal law, and may be drawn from any one or more branches of the federal government, but no such representative shall have a vote on the Commission.

(b) The Commission may provide information and make recommendations to any executive or legislative agency or officer of the federal government concerning the common education policies of the states, and may advise with any such agencies or officers concerning any matter of mutual interest.

§ 1506. COMMITTEES—ARTICLE VI

(a) To assist in the expeditious conduct of its business when the full Commission is not meeting, the Commission shall elect a Steering Committee of 32 members which, subject to the provisions of this compact and consistent with the policies of the Commission, shall be constituted and function as provided in the bylaws of the Commission. One-fourth of the voting membership of the Steering Committee shall consist of governors, one-fourth shall consist of legislators, and the remainder shall consist of other members of the Commission. A federal representative on the Commission may serve with the Steering Committee, but without vote. The voting members of the Steering Committee shall serve for terms of two years, except that members elected to the first Steering Committee of the Commission shall be elected as follows: 16 for one year and 16 for two years. The Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Treasurer of the Commission shall be members of the Steering Committee and, anything in this subsection to the contrary notwithstanding, shall serve during their continuance in these offices. Vacancies in the Steering Committee shall not affect its authority to act, but the Commission at its next regularly

ensuing meeting following the occurrence of any vacancy shall fill it for the unexpired term. No person shall serve more than two terms as a member of the Steering Committee, provided that service for a partial term of one year or less shall not be counted toward the two-term limitation.

(b) The Commission may establish advisory and technical committees composed of state, local and federal officials, and private persons to advise it with respect to any one or more of its functions. Any advisory or technical committee may, on request of the states concerned, be established to consider any matter of special concern to two or more of the party states.

(c) The Commission may establish such additional committees as its bylaws may provide.

§ 1507. FINANCE—ARTICLE VII

(a) The Commission shall advise the governor or designated officer or officers of each party state of its budget and estimated expenditures for such period as may be required by the laws of that party state. Each of the Commission's budgets of estimated expenditures shall contain specific recommendations of the amount or amounts to be appropriated by each of the party states.

(b) The total amount of appropriation requests under any budget shall be apportioned among the party states. In making such apportionment, the Commission shall devise and employ a formula which takes equitable account of the populations and per capita income levels of the party states.

(c) The Commission shall not pledge the credit of any party states. The Commission may meet any of its obligations in whole or in part with funds available to it pursuant to subsection 1503(g) of this chapter of this compact, provided that the Commission takes specific action setting aside such funds prior to incurring an obligation to be met in whole or in part in such manner. Except where the Commission makes funds available to it pursuant to subsection 1503(g) of this chapter thereof, the Commission shall not incur any obligation prior to the allotment of funds by the party states adequate to meet the same.

(d) The Commission shall keep accurate accounts of all receipts and disbursements. The receipts and disbursements of the Commission shall be subject to the audit and accounting procedures established by its bylaws. However, all receipts and disbursements of funds handled by the Commission shall be audited yearly by a qualified public accountant, and the report of the audit shall be included in and become part of the annual reports of the Commission.

(e) The accounts of the Commission shall be open at any reasonable time for inspection by duly constituted officers of the party states and by any persons authorized by the Commission.

(f) Nothing contained herein shall be construed to prevent Commission compliance with laws relating to audit or inspection of accounts by or on behalf of any government contributing to the support of the Commission.

§ 1508. ELIGIBLE PARTIES; ENTRY INTO AND WITHDRAWAL—
ARTICLE VIII

(a) This compact shall have as eligible parties all states, territories, and possessions of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In respect of any such jurisdiction not having a governor, the term “governor,” as used in this compact, shall mean the closest equivalent official of such jurisdiction.

(b) Any state or other eligible jurisdiction may enter into this compact, and it shall become binding thereon when it has adopted the same, provided that in order to enter into initial effect, adoption by at least 10 eligible party jurisdictions shall be required.

(c) Adoption of the Compact may be either by enactment thereof or by adherence thereto by the governor; provided that in the absence of enactment, adherence by the governor shall be sufficient to make his state a party only until December 31, 1967. During any period when a state is participating in this compact through gubernatorial action, the governor shall appoint those persons who, in addition to himself, shall serve as the members of the Commission from his state, and shall provide to the Commission an equitable share of the financial support of the Commission from any source available to him.

(d) Except for a withdrawal effective on December 31, 1967, in accordance with subsection (c) of this section, any party state may withdraw from this compact by enacting a statute repealing the same, but no such withdrawal shall take effect until one year after the governor of the withdrawing state has given notice in writing of the withdrawal to the governors of all other party states. No withdrawal shall affect any liability already incurred by or chargeable to a party state prior to the time of such withdrawal.

§ 1509. AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPACT—ARTICLE IX

This Compact may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the Commission present and voting when ratified by the legislatures of two-thirds of the party states.

§ 1510. CONSTRUCTION AND SEVERABILITY—ARTICLE X

This Compact shall be liberally construed so as to effectuate the purposes thereof. The provisions of this compact shall be severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence, or provision of this compact is declared to be contrary to the constitution of any state or of the United States, or the application thereof to any government, agency, person, or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this compact and the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person, or circumstance shall not be affected thereby. If this compact shall be held contrary to the constitution of any state participating therein, the Compact shall remain in full force and effect as to the state affected as to all severable matters.

* * * Background Checks * * *

Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 254a is added to read:

§ 254a. AGENCY OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

(a) The Agency of Education shall request criminal record information for a person the Secretary of Education is prepared to recommend for any full-time, part-time, or temporary employment or contractual relationship with the Agency if such person will have or has the potential to have unsupervised contact with students (the applicant).

(b) After signing a user agreement, the Secretary shall make a request for criminal records directly to the Vermont Crime Information Center.

(c) A request made under subsection (b) of this section shall be accompanied by a release signed by the applicant on a form provided by the Vermont Crime Information Center and a set of the applicant's fingerprints. The Agency shall pay the fingerprinting fee required pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2062 and shall pay any fee required by the FBI associated with a fingerprint-supported criminal record check. The release form to be signed by the applicant shall include a statement informing the applicant of:

(1) the right to challenge the accuracy of the record by appealing to the Vermont Crime Information Center pursuant to rules adopted by the Commissioner of Public Safety; and

(2) the Secretary of Education's policy regarding maintenance and destruction of records and the applicant's right to request that the record or notice be maintained for purposes of using it to comply with future criminal record check requests made pursuant to section 256 of this title.

(d) Upon completion of a criminal record check, the Vermont Crime Information Center shall send to the Secretary a notice that no record exists or, if a record exists, a copy of any criminal record. If a copy of a criminal record is received, the Secretary shall forward it to the applicant and shall inform the applicant in writing of:

(1) the right to challenge the accuracy of the record by appealing to the Vermont Crime Information Center pursuant to rules adopted by the Commissioner of Public Safety; and

(2) the Secretary of Education's policy regarding maintenance and destruction of records and the applicant's right to request that the record or notice be maintained for purposes of using it to comply with future criminal record check requests made pursuant to section 256 of this title.

(e) The Secretary shall request and obtain information from the Child Protection Registry maintained by the Department for Children and Families and from the Vulnerable Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Registry maintained by the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (collectively, the Registries) for any applicant for whom a criminal record check is required under subsection (a) of this section. The Departments for Children and Families and of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall adopt rules in accordance with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 governing the process for obtaining information from the Registries and for disseminating and maintaining records of that information under this subsection.

(f) An applicant convicted of a sex offense that requires registration pursuant to 13 V.S.A. chapter 167, subchapter 3 shall not be eligible for employment with the Agency.

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 256 is amended to read:

§ 256. CONTINUED VALIDITY OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK;
MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

(a)(1) Anyone required to request a criminal record check under this subchapter about a person who previously has undergone a check, regardless of whether the check was for student teaching, licensure, or employment purposes, shall comply with that requirement by acquiring the results of the previous criminal record check unless:

(A) the person refuses to authorize release of the information;

(B) the record no longer exists;

(C) since the record check, there has been a period of one year or more during which the person has not worked for a Vermont school district or, a recognized or an approved independent school, or the Agency of Education; or

(D) as otherwise required by this chapter.

(2) Anyone required to request a criminal record check under this subchapter about a person who has previously undergone a check may request a name and date of birth or fingerprint-supported recheck of the criminal record at any time during the course of the record subject's employment in the

capacity for which the original check was required. Rechecking criminal records may be accomplished through a subscription service.

* * *

* * * Intercollegiate Sexual Harm Prevention Council * * *

Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 183 is amended to read:

§ 183. INTERCOLLEGIATE SEXUAL HARM PREVENTION COUNCIL

(a) Creation. There is created the Intercollegiate Sexual Harm Prevention Council to ~~create a coordinated~~ advance best practices for prevention of and response to campus sexual harm across institutions of higher learning in Vermont.

(b) Membership.

(1) The Council shall be composed of the following members:

(A)(1) ~~a the Title IX coordinator and a campus-based sexual harm prevention/education coordinator from an institution of higher learning, appointed by the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges or designee from each postsecondary school chartered in Vermont with a physical campus located within Vermont;~~

(B)(2) ~~a Title IX coordinator and a campus-based sexual harm prevention/education coordinator from an institution of higher learning, appointed by the President of the University of Vermont a peer educator or advocate appointed by the Vice Provost for Student Affairs of the University of Vermont;~~

(C)(3) ~~a Title IX coordinator and a campus-based sexual harm prevention/education coordinator from an institution of higher learning, appointed by the President of the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges the Executive Director of the Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence or designee;~~

(D)(4) ~~two community-based sexual violence advocates, appointed by the Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence the Program Coordinator of the Vermont Forensic Nursing Program or designee; and~~

(E)(5) ~~two law enforcement or public safety representatives with experience responding to and investigating campus sexual violence, appointed by the Commissioner of Public Safety; the Commissioner of Public Safety or designee.~~

(F) ~~three college students, at least one of whom has lived experience as a sexual violence survivor and one who represents a campus-based racial justice organization, appointed by the Center for Crime Victim Services;~~

~~(G) a person with expertise in sexual violence responses within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community, appointed by the Center for Crime Victim Services;~~

~~(H) a sexual assault nurse examiner, appointed by the Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence;~~

~~(I) a prosecutor with experience in prosecuting sexual violence cases from either the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs or the Office of the Attorney General, appointed by the Attorney General; and~~

~~(J) an attorney with experience in sexual violence cases, appointed by the Defender General.~~

~~(2) To ensure a council that is reflective of Vermont's college campuses, appointing authorities shall consider diversity when making appointments to the Council.~~

(c) Duties. The Council shall:

~~(1) review the recommendations from the Report of the Vermont Campus Sexual Harm Task Force and develop prevention solutions to sexual harm based on those recommendations; [Repealed.]~~

~~(2) implement interdisciplinary planning and information sharing to support sexual violence prevention programs on every college campus in Vermont; [Repealed.]~~

~~(3) undertake an annual review of trends in aggregate data collected by institutions of higher learning regarding sexual violence on college campuses in Vermont; [Repealed.]~~

~~(4) identify and share information about effective practices on regarding sexual violence prevention and response, sexual health education, and strategies for mitigating sexual harm and secondary impacts of sexual harm on college campuses in Vermont;~~

~~(5) identify share information about campus-wide activities, publications, and services that promote a campus culture of respect to support the prevention of sexual harm;~~

~~(6) recommend statutory protections to the General Assembly not later than November 1, 2021 to ensure that survivors of sexual harm are not punished for reporting an incident of sexual violence due to alcohol, drug use, or other minor conduct violations occurring at or around the time of an assault; and [Repealed.]~~

~~(7) create or promote annual share information about training opportunities addressing prevention and sexual assault response processes open~~

~~to representatives from all Vermont postsecondary schools for college populations.~~

~~(d) Assistance.—The Council shall have the administrative and technical assistance of the Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. [Repealed.]~~

~~(e) Report.—On or before December 1, 2022 and annually thereafter, the Council shall submit a written report to the General Assembly with a summary of activities and any recommendations for legislative action. [Repealed.]~~

~~(f) Meetings.~~

~~(1) The Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence shall call the first meeting of the Council to occur on or before July 15, 2021 November 15, 2026.~~

~~(2) The Council shall select ~~a chair~~ co-chairs from among its members at the first meeting, with one chair representing a public postsecondary school and one chair representing a private postsecondary school.~~

~~(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.~~

~~(4) The Council shall meet ~~quarterly~~ twice per year.~~

~~(5) Members who are not otherwise compensated by the member's employer for attendance at meetings shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence for such purposes The co-chairs shall provide the Council with administrative support.~~

~~(6) The Council may invite or consult other community representatives as it deems appropriate.~~

~~*** Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying Advisory Council ***~~

~~Sec. 6. 16 V.S.A. § 570 is amended to read:~~

~~§ 570. HARASSMENT, HAZING, AND BULLYING PREVENTION POLICIES~~

~~***~~

~~(d) Duties of the Secretary. The Secretary shall:~~

~~(1) develop and, from time to time, update model harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention policies; and~~

~~(2) establish an Advisory Council to review and coordinate school and statewide activities relating to the prevention of and response to harassment, hazing, and bullying. The Council shall report annually in January to the State Board and the House and Senate Committees on Education. The Council shall include:~~

~~(A) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or designee;~~

~~(B) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association or designee;~~

~~(C) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association or designee;~~

~~(D) the President of the Vermont National Education Association or designee;~~

~~(E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Human Rights Commission or designee;~~

~~(F) the Executive Director of the Vermont Independent Schools Association or designee; and~~

~~(G) other members selected by the Secretary, at least one of whom shall be a current secondary student who has witnessed or experienced harassment, hazing, or bullying in the school environment; and~~

(3) provide the Advisory Council with administrative support.

(e) Advisory Council on Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention in Schools.

(1) Membership. The Advisory Council shall be composed of the following members:

(A) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or designee;

(B) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association or designee;

(C) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association or designee;

(D) the President of the Vermont National Education Association or designee;

(E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Human Rights Commission or designee;

(F) the Executive Director of the Vermont Independent Schools Association or designee;

(G) two members who serve as designated employees under the hazing, harassment, and bullying prevention policy, appointed by the Secretary of Education;

(H) a member, appointed by the Vermont Educational Equity Collective;

(I) a school social worker, appointed by the National Association of Social Workers-Vermont Chapter;

(J) a member, appointed by the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights;

(K) a student member, appointed by the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network;

(L) a student member, appointed by Outright Vermont;

(M) a member, appointed by the Office of Racial Equity;

(N) a member, appointed by the Commission on Women;

(O) a member, appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence; and

(P) a parent or caregiver member, appointed by the Vermont Family Network.

(2) Duties. The Advisory Council shall:

(A) meet at least four and not more than 12 times per year;

(B) review and advise on coordination of school and statewide activities relating to the prevention of and response to harassment, hazing, and bullying;

(C) review the model harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention policies developed by the Secretary every three years, beginning in 2026, and recommend updates to the policies as necessary;

(D) review and advise on resources on harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention and response for school professionals;

(E) annually solicit input from students, parents, and schools on harassment, hazing, and bullying; and

(F) notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), annually on or before January 15, submit a written report to House and Senate Committees on Education, which shall hold a joint legislative hearing each legislative session to review the report. The Advisory Council shall also submit the report to the State Board of Education at the same time.

(3) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Advisory Council shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 12 meetings of the Advisory Council per year from funds appropriated to the Agency of Education.

~~(e)~~(f) Definitions. In this subchapter:

(1) “Educational institution” and “school” mean a public school or an approved or recognized independent school as defined in section 11 of this title.

(2) “Organization,” “pledging,” and “student” have the same meanings as in section 570i of this title.

(3) “Harassment,” “hazing,” and “bullying” have the same meanings as in subdivisions 11(a)(26), (30), and (32) of this title.

(4) “School board” means the board of directors or other governing body of an educational institution when referring to an independent school.

Sec. 7. APPROPRIATION

The sum of \$21,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2027 for per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses for the Advisory Council on Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention as authorized pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 570(e)(3).

* * * Energy Performance Contracting * * *

Sec. 8. 16 V.S.A. § 3448f(a)(1) is amended to read:

(1) “Cost-saving measure” means any facility improvement, repair, addition, or alteration or any equipment, fixture, or furnishing to be constructed or installed in any facility that is designed to reduce energy consumption and operating costs or to increase the operating efficiency of facilities for their appointed functions, that is cost effective, and that is further defined by State Board rule.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.