S.232

Introduced by Senators Hardy, Chittenden, Clarkson, Gulick, Hashim, Lyons, Major, Vyhovsky and White

Referred to Committee on Education

Date: January 9, 2026

Subject: Libraries, history, and information technology; Vermont Libraries Day; education; Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund; early education grants; Department of Libraries; State Librarian; duties; municipal government; bonding; improvements for public libraries

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to amend the statutes related to libraries and education grants to designate the third Monday in October as Vermont Libraries Day, expressly include public libraries in the list of eligible recipients of afterschool and summer reading funding from the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund, expressly include public libraries in the list of community organizations eligible for early education funding, modify the term “collection” to include digital or physical materials wherever that term is used in the statute governing the duties of the Department of Libraries, require the Department of Libraries to publish guidance documents concerning grants and funding available to municipal

public libraries, and expressly authorize municipalities to bond for improvements to any public library.

An act relating to public libraries and the Department of Libraries

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

* * * Findings * * *

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) The State of Vermont and its communities depend on libraries as centers for learning, social connection, technological access, disaster preparedness and response, support of health care and social services, and numerous other vital services.

(2) As places of public accommodation, public libraries are obligated to ensure that their services, facilities, and resources are inclusive and accessible to all. However, many of Vermont's existing library facilities require improvements in order to fulfill this obligation and meet programming needs.

(3) Early literacy is integral to student preparedness and success. Vermont's Department of Libraries and statewide network of public libraries are uniquely suited to play a critical role in improving the literacy skills of students throughout the State.

(4) It is essential that the State raise awareness about public libraries and their offerings in order to ensure their continued beneficial impact and continued accessibility for all Vermont residents.

* * * Vermont Libraries Day * * *

Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. § 379 is added to read:

§ 379. VERMONT LIBRARIES DAY

The third Monday in the month of October is designated as "Vermont Libraries Day."

* * * Afterschool, Summer Reading, and Early Education Funding for Public Libraries * * *

Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 51 is amended to read:

§ 51. UNIVERSAL AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER SPECIAL FUND

(a) The Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund is created, to be managed by the Agency of Education. The cannabis sales tax revenue shall be deposited into the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund. The Fund shall be used as follows:

* * *

(2) Cannabis sales tax revenue shall be used to support a mixed delivery system for afterschool and summer programming. Eligible recipients can be public, private, or nonprofit organizations, including public libraries. A reasonable portion of funding shall be allocated to the Department of Libraries

~~to support the Statewide Summer Reading Program and grants for afterschool~~ activities in libraries.

* * *

(b) An advisory committee is created to support the Secretary in administering the funds. The Agency shall provide administrative and technical support to the advisory committee. The advisory committee shall be composed of:

* * *

(7) the Vermont Afterschool Executive Director or designee; ~~and~~

(8) a representative from the Governor's office; and

(9) the State Librarian or designee.

* * *

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 4014 is amended to read:

§ 4014. EARLY EDUCATION

* * *

(b) The Secretary shall solicit proposals for early education programs from community organizations serving young children. Community organizations include school districts; public libraries; other public agencies, including Head Start programs; and private agencies, including child care programs and parent-child centers.

* * *

* * * Department of Libraries; Duties * * *

Sec. 5. 22 V.S.A. § 605 is amended to read:

§ 605. DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES

The duties and functions of the Department of Libraries shall be to provide, administer, and maintain:

* * *

(2) A digital or physical collection of federal documents.

(3) An information and reference service to State government, including a comprehensive digital or physical collection of current information relating to matters of public policy and topics pertinent to State government.

(4) A general library collection of a sufficient size and scope to reinforce and supplement the resources of local and regional libraries. ~~All materials of the Department of Libraries~~ The collection may be composed of digital or physical materials and shall be available for free circulation to all citizens, institutions, and organizations under procedures adopted by the State Librarian except that the State Librarian may restrict rare or reference-type materials to one location. The Department shall arrange, classify, and catalog all materials in its custody and provide for their safekeeping and shall rebind books as needed. The Department shall provide service to other libraries in

the State, schools, and individuals and may provide service by mail or book-wagon or otherwise.

* * *

Sec. 6. 22 V.S.A. § 606 is amended to read:

§ 606. OTHER DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Department, in addition to the functions specified in section 605 of this title:

* * *

(12) Shall publish guidance documents concerning current grants and programs available for the support of municipal public libraries and post these guidance documents on the Department's website. The Department, in consultation with the Vermont Bond Bank, shall publish guidance concerning municipal bonding for the improvement of public libraries.

* * * Municipal Bonds; Improvements to Public Libraries * * *

Sec. 7. 24 V.S.A. § 1752a is amended to read:

§ 1752a. PUBLIC LIBRARIES; PRIVATELY OWNED MUNICIPALITY-SUPPORTED LIBRARIES

By a majority vote of those present and voting at an annual or special meeting warned for the purpose, a municipality may issue municipal bonds under this chapter for the cost of capital improvements to any public library, as defined in 22 V.S.A. § 101, including any privately owned municipality-

supported library situated within the municipality for use of residents of the municipality; and ~~such~~ the improvements shall be considered "improvements" for the purposes of this chapter.

* * * Grant Programs; Inclusion of Libraries in Plan Submissions * * *

Sec. 8. 24 V.S.A. § 2783 is amended to read:

§ 2783. ELIGIBILITY FOR PERFORMANCE GRANTS

Upon receipt of a proposal for a performance grant, the Secretary shall within 60 days determine whether or not the service provider may be awarded a performance grant under this chapter. The Secretary shall enter into a performance grant with a service provider if the Secretary finds:

* * *

(10) the service provider demonstrates a capability and willingness to assist public libraries, to encourage the development and growth of programs and services at public libraries, and to increase awareness of the resources available through public libraries within the service area; and

(11) the service provider demonstrates a willingness to coordinate its activities with the planning functions of any regional planning commission located in the same geographic area as the service provider.

Sec. 9. 24 V.S.A. § 4307 is amended to read:

§ 4307. MUNICIPAL BYLAW MODERNIZATION GRANTS

* * *

~~(f) To receive the grant, the municipality shall:~~

* * *

(7) update the municipal plan's housing element as provided in subdivision 4382(a)(10) of this title related to addressing lower- and moderate-income housing needs, implement that element of the plan including through the bylaw amendments, and demonstrate how those bylaws support the implementation of the housing element; ~~and~~

(8) update the municipal plan's utility and facility element as provided in subdivision 4382(a)(4) of this title related to addressing present and prospective library facilities, resources, and services and update the municipality's recommendations for meeting future needs for library facilities and services, with indications of priority of need, costs, and method of financing; and

(9) comply with the State and Federal Fair Housing Act, including the fair housing provisions of Vermont's Planning and Development Act.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 10. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

** * * Findings * * **

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) The State of Vermont and its communities depend on libraries as centers for learning, social connection, technological access, disaster preparedness and response, support of health care and social services, and numerous other vital services.

(2) As places of public accommodation, public libraries are obligated to ensure that their services, facilities, and resources are inclusive and accessible to all. However, many of Vermont's existing library facilities require improvements in order to fulfill this obligation and meet programming needs.

(3) Early literacy is integral to student preparedness and success. Vermont's Department of Libraries and statewide network of public libraries are uniquely suited to play a critical role in improving the literacy skills of students throughout the State.

(4) It is essential that the State raise awareness about public libraries and their offerings in order to ensure their continued beneficial impact and continued accessibility for all Vermont residents.

(5) For more than 125 years, public libraries have provided diverse afterschool and summer programs and literacy opportunities to all children free of charge. These programs often include literacy, arts, technology, or science education; nutritious meals; and creative recreational activities.

** * * Vermont Libraries Day * * **

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** * * Afterschool, Summer Reading, and Early Education Funding for Public Libraries * * **

~~Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 51 is amended to read:~~

§ 51. UNIVERSAL AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER SPECIAL FUND

(a) The Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund is created~~, to be managed by the Agency of Education~~. The cannabis sales tax revenue shall be deposited into the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund. The Fund shall be used as follows:

(1) To establish ~~a~~ grant ~~program~~ programs managed by the Agency of Education and the Department of Libraries that ~~supports~~ support the expansion of universal afterschool and summer programs with a focus on ~~underserved areas of the State.~~

~~(2) Cannabis~~ Ninety-five percent of the cannabis sales tax revenue deposited in the Fund shall be used by the Agency of Education to support a mixed delivery system for afterschool and summer programming. Eligible recipients can be public, private, or nonprofit organizations.

(2) Five percent of the cannabis sales tax revenue deposited in the Fund shall be used by the Department of Libraries to support afterschool and summer programming at libraries.

(3) The Agency and Department programs shall be subject to the following:

(A) Grants may be used for technical assistance, program implementation, program expansion, program sustainability, and related costs.

(B) Funds may be used to directly target communities with low existing capacity to serve youth in afterschool and summer settings.

(C) The award of grants and any subsequent contract or written agreement issued pursuant to the award of a grant shall require that a grantee does not discriminate, and prohibits its employees, agents, subcontractors, and other service providers from discriminating, on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

(D) The Agency may use up to $500,000.00 annually for administrative costs to allow for the support of the grant program and technical assistance to communities. This ~~could~~ may include subcontracts to support the grant program.

(b) An advisory committee is created to support the Secretary in administering the funds. The Agency shall provide administrative and technical support to the advisory committee. The advisory committee shall be composed of:

* * *

(7) the Vermont Afterschool Executive Director or designee; ~~and~~

(8) a representative from the Governor's office; and

(9) the State Librarian or designee.

* * *

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deposited into the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund. The Fund shall be used as follows:

(1) To establish a grant program that supports ~~the expansion of~~ sustaining or expanding universal afterschool and summer programs with a focus on underserved areas of the State.

(2) Cannabis sales tax revenue shall be used to support a mixed delivery system for afterschool and summer programming. Eligible recipients can be public, private, or nonprofit organizations, including public libraries, schools, and volunteer mentoring programs. The Agency may allocate a portion of the funds annually to the Department of Libraries for the purpose of providing subgrants to public libraries to sustain or create summer and afterschool programming. A coalition or group of public libraries may also apply for a grant from the Agency or Department.

* * *

(E) The Agency shall create a simple application and reporting process that reduces barriers to grant program participation for small, community-based organizations, such as rural public libraries, volunteer mentoring programs, and similar organizations.

(b) An advisory committee is created to support the Secretary in administering the funds. The Agency shall provide administrative and technical support to the advisory committee. The advisory committee shall be composed of:

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(8) a representative from the Governor's office; and

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* * *

(e) Annually, the advisory committee shall solicit public input on the grant program and procedures established pursuant to this section. The advisory committee shall hold a meeting to discuss the public input and any plans to implement recommended changes to the grant program.

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 4014 is amended to read:

§ 4014. EARLY EDUCATION

(a) The Secretary may grant funds for voluntary early education programs. The funds may be used for personnel costs, training of parents and staff,

materials and educational equipment, and other costs related to early education programs, including training for public library staff.

(b) The Secretary shall solicit proposals for early education programs from community organizations serving young children. Community organizations include school districts; public libraries; other public agencies, including Head Start programs; and private agencies, including child care programs and parent-child centers.

* * *

** * * Department of Libraries; Duties * * **

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(4) A general library collection of a sufficient size and scope to reinforce and supplement the resources of local and regional libraries. ~~All materials of the Department of Libraries~~ The collection may be composed of digital and physical materials and shall be available for free circulation to all citizens, institutions, and organizations under procedures adopted by the State Librarian except that the State Librarian may restrict rare or reference-type materials to one location. The Department shall arrange, classify, and catalog all materials in its custody and provide for their safekeeping and shall rebind books as needed. The Department shall provide ~~service~~ materials to other libraries in the State, schools, and individuals ~~and may provide service by mail or book wagon or otherwise~~ through interlibrary loan and shall encourage the sharing of library materials between libraries in Vermont and nationally through interlibrary loan.

(5) A service of advice and consultation to all libraries in the State, in order to assist them in realizing their potential. ~~This service shall be provided at a regional level as well as at the State level.~~ The Department may provide centralized cataloging and other related technical services to libraries in the State to the extent feasible.

* * *

Sec. 6. 22 V.S.A. § 143 is amended to read:

§ 143. TRUSTEES

(a) Unless a municipality that has established or shall establish a public library votes at its annual meeting to elect a board of trustees, the governing body of the municipality shall appoint the trustees. The appointment or election of the trustees shall continue in effect until changed at an annual meeting of the municipality. When trustees are first chosen, they shall be elected or appointed for staggered terms. This subsection shall not be construed to apply to public libraries that are privately established, chartered, or incorporated pursuant to subchapter 2 of this chapter.

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** * * Municipal Bonds; Improvements to Public Libraries * * **

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By a majority vote of those present and voting at an annual or special meeting warned for the purpose, a municipality may issue municipal bonds under this chapter for the cost of capital improvements to any public library, as defined in 22 V.S.A. § 101, including any privately owned municipality-supported library situated within the municipality for use of residents of the municipality; and ~~such~~ the improvements shall be considered "improvements" for the purposes of this chapter.

** * * Repeal * * **

Sec. 8. REPEAL

22 V.S.A. § 608 (Audio-Visual Revolving Fund) is repealed.

** * * Effective Date * * **

Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.