

# House Calendar

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Tuesday, April 1, 2025

84th DAY OF THE BIENNIAL SESSION

House Convenes at 10:00 A.M.

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**ACTION CALENDAR**

**Third Reading**

**H. 494**

An act relating to capital construction and State bonding

**Favorable with Amendment**

**H. 91**

An act relating to the Emergency Temporary Shelter Program

**Rep. McGill of Bridport**, for the Committee on Human Services, recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

\* \* \* Findings and Legislative Intent \* \* \*

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, Vermont had the fourth highest rate of homelessness in 2024 in that 53 of every 10,000 Vermonters are experiencing homelessness, with only Hawaii, New York, and Oregon experiencing higher rates;

(2) in 2023, according to the same Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, 51 of every 10,000 Vermonters were experiencing homelessness;

(3) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, there were approximately 3,458 unhoused individuals in Vermont, which represents a 300 percent increase over the 1,110 unhoused individuals prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020;

(4) of the 3,458 unhoused individuals in Vermont identified by the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, 166 experienced unsheltered homelessness, which is the highest count of unsheltered homeless individuals in Vermont within the past decade;

(5) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, over 35 percent of those Vermonters experiencing homelessness were unhoused for more than one year and over 72 percent were unhoused for more than 90 days;

(6) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, 737 of those Vermonters experiencing homelessness were children and youth under 18 years of age and 646 were 55 years of age or older;

(7) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, Black Vermonters are 5.6 times more likely to be unhoused as compared to white Vermonters;

(8) the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment notes that 36,000 primary homes are needed in Vermont between 2025–2029, 3,295 of which are needed to address homelessness; and

(9) the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment notes that “[h]alf of all Vermont renters are cost-burdened, and one-in-four pay more than 50 [percent] of their income on housing costs, putting them at high risk of eviction,” which “is heightened by Vermont’s rental vacancy rate of 3 [percent], which is well below the 5 [percent] rate of a healthy market.”

## Sec. 2. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that unsheltered homelessness be eliminated and that homelessness in Vermont be rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is a step toward ensuring that:

(1) homelessness be reduced in Vermont and interim shelter opportunities be available to provide a stable pathway to permanent housing for all Vermonters experiencing homelessness, including safe shelter options for individuals living in unsheltered homelessness;

(2) Vermont increase the supply of emergency shelter as well as permanent supportive housing that meets the specific needs of individuals;

(3) community components of all shelter types are integrated in a systemic manner;

(4) time limits, night-by-night shelter, relocation between interim shelter sites, and other disruptions in housing stability be eliminated to the extent possible;

(5) Vermont’s emergency housing statutes, rules, policies, procedures, and practices be modeled on Housing First principles; and

(6) noncongregate shelter be used to the extent possible.

(c) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 replaces the provision of emergency housing through the General Assistance Program established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 21 and the Housing Opportunity Grant Program.

\* \* \* Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program \* \* \*

Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is added to read:

CHAPTER 22. VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE  
AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING PROGRAM

§ 2201. SHORT TITLE

The Program established in this chapter may be cited as “VHEARTH” or the “VHEARTH Program.”

§ 2202. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the General Assembly to replace the provision of emergency housing through the General Assistance Program established in chapter 21 of this title and the Housing Opportunity Grant Program and use funds and resources previously attributed to those programs, and any other identified State and federal monies, to fund the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established in this chapter.

§ 2203. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “At-risk of homelessness” means in peril of imminently losing a primary, night-time residence or precariously housed.

(2) “Community action agency” means an agency designated pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 59.

(3) “Community-based shelter” means a shelter that meets the Department’s standards for the operation of shelters.

(4) “Department” means the Department for Children and Families.

(5) “Extreme weather event” means extreme hot or cold temperatures or weather events, such as hurricanes, flooding, or blizzards, that create hazardous conditions for outdoor habitation by humans.

(6) “Homeless” means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

(7) “Household” means an individual and any dependents for whom the individual is legally responsible and who live and intend to stay in Vermont. “Household” includes individuals who reside together as one economic unit, including those who are married, parties to a civil union, or unmarried.

(8) “Unsheltered homelessness” means sleeping in a location not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation.

#### § 2204. ESTABLISHMENT; VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY

##### ASSISTANCE AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program is established in the Department and shall be operated by community action agencies and a statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic or sexual violence, to the extent funds exist.

(b) Community action agencies shall collaborate with other community partners, including municipalities, the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, Balance of State Continuum of Care, and local housing coalitions. The Program shall utilize coordinated entry and shall utilize, but not duplicate, the work of the community partners. It shall include the following components:

(1) supportive services pursuant to section 2205 of this chapter to assist households experiencing homelessness or those households that are at-risk of homelessness pursuant to section 2205 of this chapter;

(2) extreme weather event shelters operated or caused to be operated by a community action agency pursuant section 2206 of this chapter; and

(3) emergency shelters operated or caused to be operated by a community action agency pursuant to section 2207 of this chapter.

(c) The Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program shall include supportive services and shelters specific to households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence, which shall be provided or caused to be provided by a statewide organization with population-specific service experience pursuant to section 2208 of this section.

#### § 2205. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

A community action agency, in collaboration with other community partners, shall offer or cause to be offered the following supportive services, which may vary in terms of manner and extent depending on the level of

shelter a household utilizes or whether the household is at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness:

- (1) intake assessments and services for diversion from homelessness;
- (2) household needs assessments;
- (3) individualized household plans to address identified needs;
- (4) assistance obtaining and retaining housing, including financial assistance;
- (5) referrals to other services and supports;
- (6) peer-supported services;
- (7) landlord-tenant outreach, education, and conflict resolution;
- (8) housing navigation services;
- (9) advocacy; and
- (10) progress monitoring and interventions.

#### § 2206. EXTREME WEATHER EVENT SHELTER

A community action agency shall operate or cause to be operated shelters in the State that shall be used during extreme weather events to shelter any homeless individual who seeks shelter. The community action agencies, in collaboration with community partners, shall prioritize funding for extreme weather event shelters by utilizing data available under this section and considering geographic access. A shelter offered pursuant to this section during an extreme weather event may include time-limited congregate accommodations and may be provided through agreements to municipalities or other entities.

#### § 2207. EMERGENCY SHELTERS

(a) Temporary shelter. At a minimum, a community action agency shall serve or cause to be served in a manner that complies with and builds upon the federally required community planning process, households that are prioritized and in need of the services of a temporary shelter. A community action agency may provide or cause to be provided temporary shelter through community-based shelters, temporary use of hotels or motels, lease agreements for full or partial use of an existing building, need-specific shelter arrangements, or other arrangements or combinations of arrangements that comply with the intent of this chapter.

(b) Transitional shelter. A community action agency shall serve or cause to be served households in its region in need of the services of a transitional

shelter in a manner that complies with and builds upon the federally required community planning process. A community action agency may provide or cause to be provided transitional shelter through community-based shelter, master grant leases, developing shelter capacity, or other arrangements or combinations of arrangements that comply with the intent of this chapter.

§ 2208. SUPPORTIVE AND SHELTER SERVICES FOR HOUSEHOLDS IMPACTED BY DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As part of the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program, the Department shall enter into an agreement with a statewide organization with population-specific experience serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence. The organization shall provide or cause to be provided various shelter and case management services that support households.

§ 2209. VHEARTH; DUTIES OF COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

(a) The community action agencies shall serve or cause to be served households that are experiencing homelessness or that are at risk of homelessness in the State by providing supportive services, extreme weather event shelter, or emergency shelter pursuant to sections 2204–2207 of this chapter. If a community action agency cannot fulfil its responsibilities under this chapter, the Department shall work with other community action agencies or other appropriate community entities to ensure that there is not a gap in services in a community action agency’s region.

(b) A community action agency providing or causing to provide services in accordance with this chapter shall:

(1) have existing or planned infrastructure to support households in the region, including an established leadership team, a human resources staff, and the ability to receive grant funding and issue subgrants;

(2) have the ability to meet the Department’s reporting requirements, including past history of reporting compliance;

(3) have community connections with other providers in the region, including local housing coalitions, housing providers, providers of coordinated entry, and providers of services to individuals who are older Vermonters, individuals who have disabilities, substance use disorder, or a mental health condition; individuals reentering the community after incarceration; individuals transitioning from the care and custody of the Commissioner for Children and Families; and families with children; and

(4) provide plain language communications to households receiving services.

§ 2210. VHEARTH; DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT

(a) The Agency of Human Services, working with the Department, shall have statewide responsibility for meeting the intent of this chapter, including statewide planning, system development, and the involvement of all the Agency's departments.

(b) For the purpose of providing administrative oversight and monitoring of the Program established in this chapter, the Department shall:

(1)(A) adopt guidance regarding when extreme weather event shelters shall be operated, including flexibility for regional weather conditions; and

(B) maintain a website with the locations of all extreme weather event shelters;

(2) include as part of any review of a community action agency required pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 59, the community action agency's ability to perform the requirements of this chapter;

(3)(A) consult with the community action agencies and the statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence pursuant to section 2208 of this chapter, to develop appropriate resource allocations and methods for adjustment that take into account available data, the presence of community-based providers, and customary resource allocation methods, economic indicators, rate of homelessness, rental vacancy rates, and other variables, as appropriate; and

(B) annually, distribute funding to each community action agency and the statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence pursuant to section 2208 of this chapter using the allocation formula developed pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3), or if the Department and community action agencies agree, disperse a joint allocation for all community action agencies, which the community action agencies shall determine how to distribute amongst themselves;

(4) consult with the community action agencies and the statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence pursuant to section 2208 of this chapter to develop appropriate measures and methods for accountability of the community action agencies' and the statewide organization's execution of duties under this chapter, including the provision of any previously agreed upon information to enable the Department to evaluate the services provided



through grant funds, the effect on households receiving services, and an accounting of expended grant funds;

(5) provide support and technical assistance to the community action agencies, other community partners, and the statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence pursuant to section 2208 of this chapter;

(6) identify specific administrative resources that could be transitioned to community operations;

(7) develop and submit standards for the operation of community-based shelters;

(8) adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, in consultation with the community action agencies and the statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence pursuant to section 2208 of this chapter, as appropriate, for the implementation of this chapter, including accommodations for individuals with a disability.

#### § 2211. REGIONAL PLANNING; NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

(a) As part of the plan required pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 59 and the federally required planning and needs assessments for the continuums of care, the community action agencies shall develop a regional needs assessment and planning process, in collaboration with community and State partners, for use in each community action agency's region to inform future plans addressing housing and homelessness in each region of the State. The plans shall include:

(1) addressing progress in reducing the number of households experiencing homelessness in a region;

(2) assessing the rate households placed in permanent housing return to homelessness and the underlying reasons;

(3) identifying resources developed and utilized in the region to address homelessness;

(4) reporting the rate of household participation with coordinated entry processes and case management services;

(5) identifying system gaps and the funding needed to address those gaps, including periodic inflationary adjustments; and

(6) utilizing data, including Vermont's Point-in-Time Count, coordinated entry assessment results, and community conversations.

(b) Each community action agency shall submit plans developed pursuant to this section to the Department in a format prescribed by the Department.

The Department shall aggregate the results of these reports and submit the aggregated report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

#### § 2212. USE OF HOTEL AND MOTEL ROOMS

(a) Hotels and motels providing emergency shelter pursuant to this chapter shall comply with Program rules and shall comply with the following:

(1) Department of Health, Licensed Lodging Establishment Rule (CVR 13-140-023); and

(2) Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code (CVR 28-070-001).

(b) Annually, the Department shall propose hotel and motel rates as part of its budget presentation for approval by the General Assembly. A community action agency shall not pay or cause to be paid with State monies a per room, per night basis that exceeds the rate approved by the General Assembly.

(c) To the extent possible, if a hotel or motel is being utilized:

(1) a community action agency shall enter into agreements for the use of blocks of hotel and motel rooms and negotiate the conditions of use for those blocks, including access for providers of case management or other supportive services; and

(2) prioritize the use of hotel and motel room agreements over individual per-room, per-night hotel or motel room use, unless it is not appropriate to a household's needs.

#### Sec. 4. VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(a) Creation. There is created the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program Implementation Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendations to the Commissioner for Children and Families and to the community action agencies as defined in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 regarding the design, implementation, and transition to the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22, including advice and recommendations on the implementation plan required pursuant to Sec. 5 of this act.

(b) Membership. The Advisory Committee's membership shall reflect the growing diversity among Vermonters, including individuals who are Black,

Indigenous, and Persons of Color, as well as with regard to socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender, sexual identity, and disability status and shall be composed of:

(1) five representatives with lived experience of homelessness, appointed by the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance and the Balance of State Continuum of Care;

(2) five representatives, one appointed by each of the community action agencies;

(3) one representative, appointed by the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance;

(4) one representative, appointed by the Balance of State Continuum of Care;

(5) five representatives of local housing coalitions, including at least two of whom are shelter providers, appointed jointly by the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance and the Balance of State Continuum of Care;

(6) the Deputy Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families' Economic Services Division or designee; and

(7) the Director of the Department for Children and Families' Office of Economic Opportunity or designee.

(c) Assistance. The Advisory Committee shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department for Children and Families.

(d) Meetings.

(1) The Commissioner shall call the first meeting of the Advisory Committee to occur on or before July 15, 2025.

(2) The Committee shall select co-chairs from among its members at the first meeting at least one of whom is not a State employee.

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

(4) The Advisory Committee may divide into subcommittees to carry out its duties under this section and subcommittees may include individuals not appointed to the Advisory Committee pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, including representatives of individuals who are older Vermonters, individuals who have disabilities, substance use disorder, or a mental health condition; individuals reentering the community after incarceration; individuals transitioning from the care and custody of the Commissioner for Children and Families; and families with children.

(e) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Advisory Committee 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 annually. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department.

(f) Sunset. The Advisory Committee shall cease to exist on July 1, 2029.

#### Sec. 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

On or before February 1, 2026, the Department for Children and Families, in collaboration with community action agencies and in consultation with the departments of the Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program Implementation Advisory Committee established pursuant to Sec. 4 of this act, shall submit a plan to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare for the implementation of the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established by 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 that ensures maximum flexibility for the use of resources and streamlines processes for Program participants. Specifically, the implementation plan shall address:

(1) funding allocations among the community action agencies and other providers, including for services specific to households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic or sexual violence;

(2) additional State and federal funding and other resources identified for the Program;

(3) appropriate measures and methods of accountability in fulfilling the intent of this act for community action agencies, the organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence, and community partners;

(4) appropriate supportive services specific to the level of shelter a household utilizes, or whether the household is at risk of homelessness, or experiencing unsheltered homelessness;

(5) establishing an appeals process that includes a hearing before the Human Services Board and an option for an expedited appeals process;

(6) expanded use of 211 within the intake system;

(7) whether continuation in emergency shelter should include an expectation regarding household participation in case management services or other expectations such as night limits on the use of hotels and motels, and if

so, what elements and in what circumstances participation in case management services or other expectations should be applied;

(8) whether the use of emergency shelter should include financial participation, and if so, what that participation should include;

(9) how prioritization should occur for emergency temporary shelter and what priority categories should exist within those parameters;

(10) how to best ensure that there is equitable access to shelter and supportive services for households experiencing homelessness;

(11) the appropriate level of required intake and assessment processes for each of the various levels of shelter that a household may utilize for households that are at risk of homelessness and for households experiencing unsheltered homelessness; and

(12) any anticipated challenges requiring a legislative solution.

\* \* \* Community Action Agencies \* \* \*

Sec. 6. 3 V.S.A. chapter 59 is amended to read:

#### CHAPTER 59. COMMUNITY SERVICES ACTION AGENCIES

##### § 3901. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

(a) Recognizing that the economic well-being and social equity of every Vermonter has long been a fundamental concern of the State, it remains evident that ~~poverty continues to be the lot of~~ a substantial number of Vermont's population continues to experience poverty. It is the policy of ~~this~~ the State to help develop the full potential of each of its citizens so they can contribute to the fullest extent possible to the life of our communities and the State as a whole.

(b) It is the purpose of this chapter to strengthen, supplement, and coordinate efforts that further this policy through:

(1) the strengthening of community capabilities for planning, coordinating, and managing federal, State, and other sources of assistance related to the problem of poverty;

(2) the better organization and utilization of a range of services related to the needs of ~~the poor~~ individuals with low income; and

(3) the broadening of the resource base of programs to secure a more active role in assisting ~~the poor~~ individuals with low income from business, labor, and other groups from the private sector.

§ 3902. OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

(a) The Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity is hereby authorized to allocate available financial assistance for community ~~services~~ action agencies and programs in accordance with State and federal law and regulation.

(b) The Director may provide financial assistance to community ~~services~~ action agencies for the planning, conduct, administration, and evaluation of community ~~service~~ action programs to provide a range of services and activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on causes of poverty in the community or in areas of the community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Components of those services and activities may involve, without limitation of other activities and supporting facilities designed to assist ~~low-income participants with low income~~ low-income participants with low income:

(1) to secure and retain meaningful employment;

(2) to obtain adequate education;

(3) to make better use of available income;

(4) to ~~provide and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living environment~~ have access to safe, secure, permanent housing;

(5) to obtain prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services ~~for the prevention of narcotics addiction, alcoholism, and for the rehabilitation of narcotic addicts and alcoholics~~ individuals with substance use disorder;

(6) to obtain emergency assistance through loans and grants to meet immediate and urgent individual and family needs, including the need for health services, nutritious food, housing, and unemployment-related assistance;

(7) to remove obstacles and solve personal and family problems ~~which~~ that block achievement of self-sufficiency;

(8) to achieve greater participation in the affairs of the community;

(9) to make more frequent and effective use of other programs related to the purposes of this chapter; and

(10) to coordinate and establish linkages between governmental and other social service programs to ~~assure~~ ensure the effective delivery of such services to ~~low-income persons~~ with low income and to encourage the use of entities in the private sector of the community in efforts to ameliorate poverty in the community.

(c) The Director is authorized to adopt rules pursuant to chapter 25 of this title appropriate to the carrying out of this chapter and the purposes thereof.

§ 3903. DESIGNATION OF AGENCIES TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND  
ACTIVITIES TO AMELIORATE OR ELIMINATE POVERTY

The Director shall designate private nonprofit community based organizations ~~who~~ that have demonstrated or ~~who~~ that can demonstrate the ability to provide services and activities as defined in subsection 3902(b) of this title as community ~~services~~ action agencies.

§ 3904. COMMUNITY ~~SERVICES~~ ACTION AGENCY PLAN

Each designated community ~~services~~ action agency shall determine the need for activities and services within the area served by the agency and shall thereafter prepare a community services plan ~~which~~ that describes the method by which the agency will provide those services. The plan shall include a schedule for the anticipated provision of new or additional services and shall specify the resources ~~which~~ that are needed by and available to the agency to implement the plan. The community services plan shall be completed every three years and updated annually. The plan shall include the regional needs assessment required under 33 V.S.A. § 2211.

§ 3905. COMMUNITY ~~SERVICES~~ ACTION AGENCIES;  
ADMINISTRATION

(a) Each community ~~services~~ action agency shall administer its programs as set out in the community services plan and as approved by its board of directors.

(b) Each board of a nonprofit community-based organization that is designated a community ~~services~~ action agency under section 3903 of this chapter shall have an executive committee of not more than seven members who shall be representative of the composition of the board and the board shall be so constituted that:

\* \* \*

(2) one-third of the members of the board are persons chosen in accordance with election procedures adequate to ~~assure~~ ensure that they are representative of ~~the poor~~ individuals with low income in the area served; and

(3) the remainder of the members of the board are officials or members of business, industry, labor, religious, welfare, education, or other major groups and interests in the community.

(c) Each member of ~~the~~ a board selected to represent a specific geographic area within a community shall reside in the area ~~he or she~~ the member represents. ~~No person selected under subdivisions (2) or (3) of subsection (b)~~

~~as a member of a board shall serve on such board for more than five consecutive years, or more than a total of 10 years~~ Each board shall adopt term limits to govern its members.

\* \* \* Appropriations \* \* \*

#### Sec. 7. APPROPRIATION; TRANSITION PLANNING

In fiscal year 2026, \$10,000,000.00 of one-time funding is appropriated from the General Fund as follows:

(1) \$6,500,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for distribution to the community action agencies and the statewide organization serving households experiencing or who have experienced domestic and sexual violence;

(2) \$500,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for contractual and other system transformation assistance; and

(3) \$3,000,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for the continued development of shelter capacity in the State.

#### Sec. 8. FUTURE APPROPRIATIONS; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that in fiscal year 2027 and thereafter, equivalent funds and resources, base and one-time, used in fiscal year 2025 for General Assistance emergency housing and the Housing Opportunity Grant Program be redesignated for the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 22.

\* \* \* Effective Dates \* \* \*

#### Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that Sec. 3 (Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program) shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program”

**(Committee Vote: 8-2-1)**

**Rep. Bluemle of Burlington**, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommends the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee on Human Services.

**(Committee Vote: 8-3-0)**



**NOTICE CALENDAR**  
**Favorable with Amendment**  
**H. 454**

An act relating to transforming Vermont's education governance, quality, and finance systems

**Rep. Conlon of Cornwall**, for the Committee on Education, recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

\* \* \* Findings and Intent \* \* \*

Sec. 1. FINDINGS; INTENT; PLAN

(a) The General Assembly finds that:

(1) In 1997, the first piece of law the General Assembly enacted in response to the *Brigham* decision stated, “[t]he right to public education is integral to Vermont’s constitutional form of government and its guarantees of political and civil rights...[and] fundamental for the success of Vermont’s children in a rapidly-changing society and global marketplace as well as the State’s own economic and social prosperity.” 16 V.S.A. § 1.

(2) From the very first attempt at creating a basic frame of government, Vermont’s founders chose to include a right to public education, the only governmental service included in Vermont’s first Constitution of 1777.

(3) As the U.S. Supreme Court stated in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), “education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments...[i]t is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities...[i]t is the very foundation of good citizenship.”

(5) The most enduring legacy of *Brigham v. State*, 166 Vt. 246 (1997) is the State’s responsibility to ensure substantially equal educational opportunities for all Vermont students.

(6) The education system is still reeling from the effects of a global pandemic, yet the same challenges that have faced Vermont’s education system remain. Thirty to 40 years ago, Vermont educated more than 110,000 students each year. Today, there are approximately 84,000 students in the public education system. Many schools have lost a significant number of students and, with them, the ability to offer robust services and programs at every school. Vermont’s youth need to be prepared for a rapidly evolving future.

(7) Vermonters deserve an exceptional educational system that is stable and predictable and where a student’s home address does not dictate the

quality of education they receive. School district size and boundaries, school size, and class size are all influential factors in shaping the quality of instruction and overall student outcomes. The effectiveness of our schools depends on teacher quality, resource availability, and the unique strengths of local communities. Change in our educational system is needed. Systems are made of people, so change must come carefully and thoughtfully, with meaningful engagement by all Vermonters.

(b) Intent; plan.

(1) To ensure each student is provided substantially equal educational opportunities that will prepare them to thrive in a 21st-century world, it is the intent of the General Assembly to work strategically, intentionally, and thoughtfully to ensure that each incremental change made to Vermont's public education system provides strength and support to its only constitutionally required governmental service.

(2) It is further the intent of the General Assembly to:

(A) in the 2026 session, enact new, larger school district boundaries and begin the process to create voting wards within each school district to ensure school board membership is apportioned in such a manner as to achieve substantially equal weighting of the votes of all voters in the election of school board members;

(B) provide or enable the provision of the necessary staffing, resources, and support to the Agency of Education, the Secretary of State's Office, town clerks, and other integral parties to the election system to hold the first school board member elections within the newly created school districts in November 2028; and

(C) provide or enable the provision of the necessary staffing, resources, and support to the Agency of Education, State Board of Education, and other integral parties to ensure that the necessary guidance and funding is in place to allow for a smooth and successful transition between the operation of Vermont's current 119 school districts to the new, larger school districts, with new school districts assuming responsibility for the education of all resident students on July 1, 2029.

\* \* \* Commission on the Future of Public Education \* \* \*

Sec. 2. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1 is amended to read:

Sec. 1. THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC  
EDUCATION; REPORTS

(a) Creation. There is hereby created the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont. The right to education is fundamental for the success of Vermont's children in a rapidly changing society and global marketplace as well as for the State's own economic and social prosperity. The Commission shall study the provision of education in Vermont and make recommendations for a statewide vision for Vermont's public education system to ensure that all students are afforded substantially equal educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and stable education system. The Commission shall also make recommendations for the strategic policy changes necessary to make Vermont's educational vision a reality for all Vermont students.

(b) Membership. The Commission shall be composed of the following members and, to the extent possible, the members shall represent the State's geographic, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity:

(1) Voting members. The following members shall be voting members of the Commission:

~~(A)~~ (A) the Secretary of Education or designee;

~~(2)~~(B) the Chair of the State Board of Education or designee;

~~(3)~~(C) the Tax Commissioner or designee;

~~(4)~~(D) one current member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

~~(5)~~(E) one current member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on Committees;

~~(6)~~(F) one representative from the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA), appointed by the VSBA Executive Director;

~~(7)~~(G) one representative from the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA), appointed by the VPA Executive Director;

~~(8)~~(H) one representative from the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), appointed by the VSA Executive Director;

~~(9)~~(I) one representative from the Vermont National Education Association (VTNEA), appointed by the VTNEA Executive Director;

~~(10)~~(J) one representative from the Vermont Association of School Business Officials (VASBO) with experience in school construction projects, appointed by the President of VASBO;

~~(11)~~(K) the Chair of the Census-Based Funding Advisory Group, created under 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173;

(12)(L) the Executive Director of the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative; and

(13)(M) one representative from the Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA), appointed by the President of VISA.

(2) Nonvoting members. The following members shall be nonvoting members of the Commission who shall be appointed on or before July 15, 2025 and all of whom shall have extensive experience working within the Vermont public education system. Appointing authorities shall coordinate to ensure that, to the extent possible, each of the five nonvoting members represents a different geographic region of the State.

(A) Two members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House, one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent of a supervisory union with multiple member school districts and one of whom shall be either a retired or former Vermont school business manager or a retired or former school board member.

(B) Two members shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees, one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent and one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont school business manager.

(C) One member shall be appointed by the Governor and shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent.

(c) Steering group. On or before July 1, 2024, the Speaker of the House shall appoint two members of the Commission, the Committee on Committees shall appoint two members of the Commission, and the Governor shall appoint two members of the Commission to serve as members of a steering group. The steering group shall provide leadership to the Commission and shall work with a consultant or consultants to analyze the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing Vermont's public education system, as well as develop and propose a work plan to formalize the process through which the Commission shall seek to achieve its final recommendations. The formal work plan shall be approved by a majority of the Commission members. The steering group shall ~~form a subcommittee of the Commission to address education finance topics in greater depth and~~ may form one or more additional subcommittees of the Commission to address ~~other~~ key topics in greater depth, as necessary. ~~The steering group may appoint non-Commission members to the education finance subcommittee. All other subcommittees shall be composed solely of Commission members.~~

(d) Collaboration and information review.

(1) The Commission ~~shall~~ may seek input from and collaborate with key stakeholders, as directed by the steering group. At a minimum, the Commission shall consult with:

- (A) the Department of Mental Health;
- (B) the Department of Labor;
- (C) the President of the University of Vermont or designee;
- (D) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges Corporation or designee;
- (E) a representative from the Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee;
- (F) the Office of Racial Equity;
- (G) a representative with expertise in the Community Schools model in Vermont;
- (H) the Vermont Youth Council;
- (I) the Commission on Public School Employee Health Benefits; and
- (J) an organization committed to ensuring equal representation and educational equity.

(2) The Commission shall also review and take into consideration existing educational laws and policy, including legislative reports the Commission deems relevant to its work and, at a minimum, 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46, 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 127, and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 76.

(e) Duties of the Commission. The Commission shall study Vermont's public education system and make recommendations to ensure all students are afforded quality educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and equitable education system that will enable students to achieve the highest academic outcomes. The result of the Commission's work shall be a ~~recommendation for a statewide vision for Vermont's public education system, with recommendations for the policy changes necessary to make Vermont's educational vision a reality~~ recommendations for the State-level education governance system, including the roles and responsibilities of the Agency of Education and the State Board of Education. In creating and making its recommendations, the Commission shall engage in the following:

(1) Public engagement. The Commission shall conduct not fewer than 14 public meetings to inform the work required under this section. At least one meeting of the Commission as a whole or a subcommittee of the

Commission shall be held in each county. The Commission shall publish a draft of its final recommendations on or before October 1, 2025, solicit public feedback, and incorporate such feedback into its final recommendations. When submitting its final recommendations to the General Assembly, the Commission shall include all public feedback received as an addendum to its final report. The public feedback process shall include:

(A) a minimum 30-day public comment period, during which time the Commission shall accept written comments from the public and stakeholders; and

(B) a public outreach plan that maximizes public engagement and includes notice of the availability of language assistance services when requested.

(2) Policy considerations. In developing its recommendations, the Commission shall consider and prioritize the following topics:

(A) Governance, resources, and administration. The Commission shall study and make recommendations regarding education governance at the State level, including the role of the Agency of Education in the provision of services and support for the education system. Recommendations under this subdivision (A) shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(i) whether changes need to be made to the structure of the Agency of Education, including whether it better serves the recommended education vision of the State as an agency or a department;

(ii) what are the staffing needs of the Agency of Education;

(iii) whether changes need to be made to the composition, role, and function of the State Board of Education to better serve the recommended education vision of the State; and

(iv) what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of local control and what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of control at the State level; and

~~(v) the effective integration of career and technical education in the recommended education vision of the State.~~

~~(B) Physical size and footprint of the education system.—The Commission shall study and make recommendations regarding how the unique geographical and socioeconomic needs of different communities should factor into the provision of education in Vermont, taking into account and building upon the recommendations of the State Aid to School Construction Working~~

~~Group. Recommendations under this subdivision (B) shall include, at a minimum, the following:~~

~~(i) an analysis and recommendation for the most efficient and effective number and location of school buildings, school districts, and supervisory unions needed to achieve Vermont's vision for education, provided that if there is a recommendation for any change, the recommendation shall include an implementation plan;~~

~~(ii) an analysis of the capacity and ability to staff all public schools with a qualified workforce, driven by data on class-size recommendations;~~

~~(iii) analysis of whether, and if so, how, collaboration with Vermont's postsecondary schools may support the development and retention of a qualified educator workforce;~~

~~(iv) an analysis of the current town tuition program and whether, and if so, what, changes are necessary to meet Vermont's vision for education, including the legal and financial impact of funding independent schools and other private institutions, including consideration of the following:~~

~~(I) the role designation, under 16 V.S.A. § 827, should play in the delivery of public education; and~~

~~(II) the financial impact to the Education Fund of public dollars being used in schools located outside Vermont; and~~

~~(v) an analysis of the current use of private therapeutic schools in the provision of special education services and whether, and if so, what, changes are necessary to meet Vermont's special education needs, including the legal and financial impact of funding private therapeutic schools. [Repealed.]~~

~~(C) The role of public schools. The Commission shall study and make recommendations regarding the role public schools should play in both the provision of education and the social and emotional well-being of students. Recommendations under this subdivision (C) shall include, at a minimum, the following:~~

~~(i) how public education in Vermont should be delivered;~~

~~(ii) whether Vermont's vision for public education shall include the provision of wraparound supports and collocation of services;~~

~~(iii) whether, and if so, how, collaboration with Vermont's postsecondary schools may support and strengthen the delivery of public education; and~~

~~(iv) what the consequences are for the Commission's recommendations regarding the role of public schools and other service providers, including what the role of public schools means for staffing, funding, and any other affected system, with the goal of most efficiently utilizing State funds and services and maximizing federal funding. [Repealed.]~~

~~(D) Education finance system. The Commission shall explore the efficacy and potential equity gains of changes to the education finance system, including weighted educational opportunity payments as a method to fund public education. The Commission's recommendations shall be intended to result in an education funding system designed to afford substantially equal access to a quality basic education for all Vermont students in accordance with State v. Brigham, 166 Vt. 246 (1997). Recommendations under this subdivision (D) shall include, at a minimum, the following:~~

~~(i) allowable uses for the Education Fund that shall ensure sustainable and equitable use of State funds;~~

~~(ii) the method for setting tax rates to sustain allowable uses of the Education Fund;~~

~~(iii) whether, and if so, what, alternative funding models would create a more affordable, sustainable, and equitable education finance system in Vermont, including the consideration of a statutory, formal base amount of per pupil education spending and whether school districts should be allowed to spend above the base amount;~~

~~(iv) adjustments to the excess spending threshold, including recommendations that target specific types of spending;~~

~~(v) the implementation of education spending caps on different services, including administrative and support services and categorical aid;~~

~~(vi) how to strengthen the understanding and connection between school budget votes and property tax bills;~~

~~(vii) adjustments to the property tax credit thresholds to better match need to the benefit;~~

~~(viii) a system for ongoing monitoring of the Education Fund and Vermont's education finance system, to include consideration of a standing Education Fund advisory committee;~~

~~(ix) an analysis of the impact of healthcare health care costs on the Education Fund, including recommendations for whether, and if so, what, changes need to be made to contain costs; and~~



~~(x) implementation details for any recommended changes to the education funding system. [Repealed.]~~

(E) Additional considerations. The Commission may consider any other topic, factor, or issue that it deems relevant to its work and recommendations.

(f) Reports. The Commission shall prepare and submit to the General Assembly the following:

(1) a formal, written work plan, which shall include a communication plan to maximize public engagement, on or before September 15, 2024;

(2) a written report containing its preliminary findings and recommendations, including short-term cost containment considerations for the 2025 legislative session, on or before December 15, 2024; and

(3) a written report containing its final findings and recommendations ~~for a statewide vision for Vermont's public education system and the policy changes necessary to make that educational vision a reality based on its analysis of the State-level governance topics contained in subdivision (e)(2)(A) of this section,~~ on or before December 1, 2025; and

~~(4) proposed legislative language to advance any recommendations for the education funding system on or before December 15, 2025.~~

(g) Assistance. The Agency of Education shall contract with one or more independent consultants or facilitators to provide technical and legal assistance to the Commission for the work required under this section. For the purposes of scheduling meetings and providing administrative assistance, the Commission shall have the assistance of the Agency of Education. The Agency shall also provide the educational and financial data necessary to facilitate the work of the Commission. School districts shall comply with requests from the Agency to assist in data collections.

(h) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Commission to occur on or before July 15, 2024.

(2) The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore shall jointly select a Commission chair.

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

(4) Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law pursuant to 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

(5) The Commission shall cease to exist on December 31, 2025.

(i) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Commission shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 30 meetings, including subcommittee meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Education.

(j) School district boundary subcommittee. There is created a subcommittee of the Commission to be composed of the five nonvoting members of the Commission that shall determine the most efficient number of school districts and proposed boundary lines, based on educational research; Vermont's geographic and cultural landscape; historic attendance patterns; and a comprehensive analysis of school locations, conditions, and capacity.

(1) Duties of the district boundaries subcommittee.

(A) The subcommittee shall recommend not more than three school district boundary proposals to the General Assembly. The proposed school district boundaries shall:

(i) increase equitable access to educational opportunity;

(ii) maximize opportunities for modern, regional middle and high schools, with the least disruption to students;

(iii) provide access to education for their resident students in grades kindergarten through 12;

(iv) provide access to career and technical education (CTE) for all eligible students;

(v) to the extent practical, not separate towns within school districts as those boundaries exist on July 1, 2025;

(vi) to the extent practical, consider the availability of regional services for students, such as designated agencies, and how those services would integrate into the new proposed school district boundaries;

(vii) to the extent practical, result in school districts with a minimum average daily membership of approximately 4,000 students; and

(viii) to the extent practical, consider historic attendance patterns in geographic areas that do not operate public schools at all grade levels from kindergarten through grade 12.

(B) The subcommittee may consider and make recommendations for the optimal location of schools, including CTE programs, to meet the requirements contained in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (1).

(C) The subcommittee shall provide regular updates to the Commission regarding its work.

(D) The subcommittee shall have the sole authority to determine the contents of the report and maps required under subdivision (4) of this subsection (j). The Commission may provide its own comments to the subcommittee and the relevant committees of jurisdiction, either as an addendum to the report of the subcommittee or as a separate report.

(2) Public engagement. The district boundary subcommittee shall engage and coordinate with the Commission's public engagement subcommittee and the public engagement consultant to maximize public input and feedback regarding the development of the proposed new school district boundaries.

(3) Assistance. The district boundary subcommittee shall have the assistance of the Agency of Digital Services, Vermont Center for Geographic Information, which may also retain the services of one or more independent third parties to provide facilitation and mediation services to the subcommittee.

(4) Report and maps. On or before December 1, 2025, the district boundary subcommittee shall submit the following to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, the Senate Committee on Government Operation, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance:

(A) Report. The district boundary subcommittee shall submit a written report with the subcommittee's proposed new school district boundaries. The report shall detail how each proposed option meets the requirements of subdivision (1)(A) of this subsection (j).

(B) Maps. The subcommittee shall also submit detailed maps for each school district boundary proposal, which, in addition to the school district boundaries themselves, shall include:

(i) average daily membership for each proposed school district for the 2023–2024 school year;

(ii) the member towns for each school district;

(iii) the location of public schools and nontherapeutic approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition as of July 1, 2025, and the grades operated by each of those schools;

(iv) the five-year facility condition index score for each school;

(v) PCB testing score for each school; and

(vi) 10-year change in enrollment between 2013 and 2023 for each school.

\* \* \* Scale \* \* \*

Sec. 3. SCALE; INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to transform education in Vermont by leveraging attainable and research-based scale to increase equity of opportunity and promote efficiency and affordability.

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 165 is amended to read:

§ 165. EDUCATION QUALITY STANDARDS; EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES; INDEPENDENT SCHOOL MEETING  
EDUCATION QUALITY STANDARDS

(a) In order to carry out Vermont's policy that all Vermont children will be afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality, each Vermont public school, including each career technical center, shall meet the following education quality standards:

\* \* \*

(9) The school complies with average class size minimum standards; provided, however, that when class size minimums apply to content areas, an individual class may be smaller than the minimum average. As used in this subdivision, "content area" means a group of courses within a specific licensing endorsement area.

(A) Class size standards.

(i) The average class size minimum for kindergarten classes shall be 12 students.

(ii) The average class size minimum for grades one through four shall be 15 students.

(iii) The average class size minimum for grades five through 12 in all required content area classes shall be 18 students.

(iv) Multiage classrooms for grades kindergarten through eight shall be limited to two grade levels per classroom.

(v) Career and technical education, flexible pathways, terminal courses, advanced placement courses, courses that require specialized equipment, and driver's education classes shall be excluded from the class size minimum requirements in this subdivision (9). Small group services for the purpose of providing special education, supplemental or targeted academic

intervention, or English learner instruction shall also be excluded from the class size minimum requirements in this subdivision (9).

(vi) Class sizes shall not exceed the maximum occupancy limits established by local and State fire codes, including egress and safety requirements.

(B) Waivers. If a school board determines that it operates a school that is unable to comply with the class size minimum standards due to geographic isolation, or a school has developed an implementation plan to meet the standards contained in this subdivision (9) that may include consolidation or merger, the school board may ask the State Board of Education to grant it waiver from this subdivision (9). The State Board shall define what qualifies as geographic isolation in its rules adopted pursuant to subdivision (a)(3) of this section. The State Board's decision shall be final.

(C) State Board action. If the Secretary determines that a school is not meeting the class size minimum standards set forth in this subdivision (9) over the course of two consecutive school years, the Secretary shall recommend to the State Board one or more of the actions listed in subsection (b) of this section, regardless of whether the school is meeting all other education quality standards. The State Board shall then follow the procedure of subsection (c) of this section.

(b) Annually, the Secretary shall determine whether students in each Vermont public school are provided educational opportunities substantially equal to those provided in other public schools. If the Secretary determines that a school is not meeting the education quality standards listed in subsection (a) of this section or that the school is making insufficient progress in improving student performance in relation to the standards for student performance set forth in subdivision 164(9) of this title, ~~he or she~~ the Secretary shall describe in writing actions that a district must take in order to meet either or both sets of standards and shall provide technical assistance to the school. If the school fails to meet the standards or make sufficient progress within two years ~~of~~ following the determination, the Secretary shall recommend to the State Board one or more of the following actions:

(1) the Agency continue to provide technical assistance for one more cycle of review;

(2) the State Board adjust supervisory union boundaries or responsibilities of the superintendency pursuant to section 261 of this title;

(3) the Secretary assume administrative control of an individual school, school district, or supervisory union, including budgetary control to ensure sound financial practices, only to the extent necessary to correct deficiencies;

(4) the State Board close an individual school or schools and require that the school district pay tuition to another public school or an approved independent school pursuant to chapter 21 of this title; or

(5) the State Board require two or more school districts to consolidate their governance structures.

(c) The State Board, after offering the school board an opportunity for a hearing, shall either dismiss the Secretary's recommendation or order that one or more of the actions listed in subsection (b) of this section be taken. The action ordered by the State Board shall be the least intrusive consistent with the need to provide students attending the school substantially equal educational opportunities. A school board aggrieved by an order of the State Board may appeal the order in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure.

\* \* \*

(e) If the Secretary determines at any time that the failure of a school to meet the education quality standards listed in subsection (a) of this section is severe or pervasive, potentially results in physical or emotional harm to students or significant deprivation of equal education opportunities, and the school has either unreasonably refused to remedy the problem or its efforts have proved ineffective, ~~he or she~~ the Secretary may recommend to the State Board one or more of the actions listed in subsection (b) of this section. The State Board shall then follow the procedure of subsection (c) of this section.

\* \* \*

(g) In addition to the education quality standards provided in subsection (a) of this section, each Vermont school district shall meet the school district quality standards adopted by rule of the Agency of Education regarding the business, facilities management, and governance practices of school districts. These standards shall include a process for school district quality reviews to be conducted by the Agency of Education. Annually, the Secretary shall publish metrics regarding the outcomes of school district quality reviews.

## Sec. 5. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH EDUCATION QUALITY

### STANDARDS; STATE BOARD ACTION

Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 165(b)(4) and (5) and any other provision of law to the contrary, the State Board shall be prohibited from ordering school district consolidation or school consolidation if a school fails to comply with

class size minimum education quality standards and the resulting consolidation would result in school construction costs in excess of the applicable district's capital reserve account until the General Assembly establishes new school district boundaries and takes further action regarding the consequences for failure to meet education quality standards.

#### Sec. 6. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; RULES; REPORT

##### (a) Rules.

(1) The State Board of Education shall initiate rulemaking to amend the Education Quality Standards rule 2000 series, Agency of Education, Education Quality Standards (22-000-003), pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25:

(A) on or before August 1, 2026, to ensure compliance with the class size minimum standards set pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 165(a)(9); and

(B) On or before July 1, 2027, to adopt standards for statewide proficiency-based graduation requirements based on standards adopted by the State Board and recommendations from the Agency of Education.

(2) On or before August 1, 2026, the State Board of Education shall initiate rulemaking to amend the approved independent school rule 2200 series, Agency of Education, Independent School Program Approval (22-000-004), pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, to require approved independent schools that intend to accept public tuition to comply with the class size minimum standards set pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 165(a)(9). The amendments shall also create a process for review by the State Board for failure to meet the class size minimum requirements and the corresponding actions the Board may take for such noncompliance; provided, however, that the Board shall provide an approved independent school a substantially similar opportunity to come into compliance with class size minimum standards that it would provide to a public school.

(b) Report. On or before December 1, 2025, the State Board of Education shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education with proposed standards for schools to be deemed "small by necessity."

#### Sec. 7. SCHOOL SIZE; INTENT

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to encourage the efficient use of public funds to modernize school infrastructure to deliver identified 21st century educational goals.

(b) It is further the intent of the General Assembly that each public school operating grades six through 12, or some subset of those grades, shall have a

minimum average daily membership of at least 450 students, at least in part by providing a robust State aid for school construction program that is driven by standards for quality for public schools, geographic accessibility, statewide enrollment trends, and capacity and scale that support substantially equal educational opportunities for all Vermont students.

Sec. 8. PROHIBITION ON SCHOOL CLOSURE AND TRANSITION TO  
PAYING TUITION

Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a school district shall be prohibited from closing an existing public school and then providing for the education of its resident students by paying tuition for its students to attend a public or approved independent school chosen by the parents of the district's students. If a school district that closes an existing public school is unable to provide for the education of its affected resident students in a different school or schools operated by the district, the school district shall provide for the education of its resident students by designating three or fewer public schools to serve as the public school or schools of the district, in accordance with the process contained in 16 V.S.A. § 827.

Sec. 9. 16 V.S.A. § 3440 is added to read:

§ 3440. STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the intent of this chapter to encourage the efficient use of public funds to modernize school infrastructure in alignment with current educational needs. School construction projects supported by this chapter should be developed taking consideration of standards of quality for public schools under section 165 of this title and prioritizing cost, geographic accessibility, 21st century education facilities standards, statewide enrollment trends, and capacity and scale that support best educational practices. Further, it is the intent of this chapter to encourage the use of existing infrastructure to meet the needs of Vermont students. Joint construction projects between two or more school districts and consolidation of buildings within a district where feasible and educationally appropriate are encouraged.

Sec. 10. 16 V.S.A. § 3442 is added to read:

§ 3442. STATE AID FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The Agency of Education shall be responsible for implementing the State Aid for School Construction Program according to the provisions of this chapter. The Agency shall be responsible for:



(1) reviewing all preliminary applications for State school construction aid and issuing an approval or denial in accordance with section 3445 of this chapter;

(2) adopting rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 pertaining to school construction and capital outlay, including rules to specify a point prioritization methodology and a bonus incentive structure aligned with the legislative intent expressed in section 3440 of this title;

(3) including as part of its budget submitted to the Governor pursuant to subdivision 212(21) of this title its annual school construction funding request;

(4) developing a prequalification and review process for project delivery consultants and architecture and engineering firms specializing in prekindergarten through grade 12 school design, renovation, or construction and maintaining a list of such prequalified firms and consultants;

(5) providing technical assistance and guidance to school districts and supervisory unions on all phases of school capital projects;

(6) providing technical advice and assistance, training, and education to school districts, supervisory unions, general contractors, subcontractors, construction or project managers, designers, and other vendors in the planning, maintenance, and establishment of school facility space;

(7) maintaining a current list of school construction projects that have received preliminary approval, projects that have received final approval, and the priority points awarded to each project;

(8) collecting, maintaining, and making publicly available quarterly progress reports of all ongoing school construction projects that shall include, at a minimum, the costs of the project and the time schedule of the project;

(9) recommending policies and procedures designed to reduce borrowing for school construction programs at both State and local levels;

(10) conducting a needs survey at least every five years to ascertain the capital construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and other capital needs for all public schools and maintaining such data in a publicly accessible format;

(11) developing a formal enrollment projection model or using projection models already available;

(12) encouraging school districts and supervisory unions to investigate opportunities for the maximum utilization of space in and around the district or supervisory union;

(13) collecting and maintaining a clearinghouse of prototypical school plans, as appropriate, that may be consulted by eligible applicants;

(14) retaining the services of consultants, as necessary, to effectuate the roles and responsibilities listed within this section; and

(15) notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), annually on or before December 15, submitting a written report to the General Assembly regarding the status and implementation of the State Aid for School Construction Program, including the data required to be collected pursuant to this section.

Sec. 11. 16 V.S.A. § 3443 is added to read:

§ 3443. STATE AID FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY

BOARD

(a) Creation. There is hereby created the State Aid for School Construction Advisory Board, which shall advise the Agency on the implementation of the State Aid for School Construction Program in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, including the adoption of rules, setting of statewide priorities, criteria for project approval, and recommendations for project approval and prioritization.

(b) Membership.

(1) Composition. The Board shall be composed of the following eight members:

(A) four members who shall serve as ex officio members:

(i) the State Treasurer or designee;

(ii) the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services or designee;

(iii) the Executive Director of the Vermont Bond Bank or designee; and

(iv) the Chair of the State Board of Education or designee; and

(B) four members, none of whom shall be a current member of the General Assembly, who shall serve four-year terms as follows:

(i) two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House, each of whom shall have expertise in education or construction, real estate, or finance and one of whom shall represent a supervisory union; and

(ii) two members, appointed by the Committee on Committees, each of whom shall have expertise in education or construction, real estate, or finance and one of whom shall be an educator.

(2) Members with four-year terms.

(A) A member with a term limit shall serve a term of four years and until a successor is appointed. A term shall begin on January 1 of the year of appointment and run through December 31 of the last year of the term. Terms of these members shall be staggered so that not all terms expire at the same time.

(B) A vacancy created before the expiration of a term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment for the unexpired portion of the term.

(C) A member with a term limit shall not serve more than two consecutive terms. A member appointed to fill a vacancy created before the expiration of a term shall not be deemed to have served a term for the purpose of this subdivision (C).

(c) Duties. The Board shall advise the Agency on the implementation of the State Aid for School Construction Program in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, including:

(1) rules pertaining to school construction and capital outlay;

(2) project priorities;

(3) proposed legislation the Board deems desirable or necessary related to the State Aid for School Construction Program, the provisions of this chapter, and any related laws;

(4) policies and procedures designed to reduce borrowing for school construction programs at both State and local levels;

(5) development of a formal enrollment projection model or the consideration of using projection models already available;

(6) processes and procedures necessary to apply for, receive, administer, and comply with the conditions and requirements of any grant, gift, appropriation of property, services, or monies;

(7) the collection and maintenance of a clearinghouse of prototypical school plans that may be consulted by eligible applicants and recommended incentives to utilize such prototypes;

(8) the determination of eligible cost components of projects for funding or reimbursement, including partial or full eligibility for project components for which the benefit is shared between the school and other municipal and community entities;

(9) development of a long-term vision for a statewide capital plan in accordance with needs and projected funding;

(10) collection and maintenance of data on all public school facilities in the State, including information on size, usage, enrollment, available facility space, and maintenance;

(11) advising districts on the use of a needs survey to ascertain the capital construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and other capital needs for schools across the State; and

(12) encouraging school districts and supervisory unions to investigate opportunities for the maximum utilization of space in and around the district or supervisory union.

(d) Meetings.

(1) The State Treasurer shall call the first meeting of the Board to occur on or before January 1, 2026.

(2) The Board shall select a chair from among its members.

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

(4) The Board shall meet not more than six times per year.

(e) Assistance. The Board shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Board shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six meetings per year.

Sec. 12. PROSPECTIVE REPEAL OF STATE AID FOR SCHOOL  
CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY BOARD

16 V.S.A. § 3443 (State Aid for School Construction Advisory Board) is repealed on July 1, 2035.

Sec. 13. 16 V.S.A. § 3444 is added to read:

§ 3444. SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AID SPECIAL FUND

(a) Creation. There is created the School Construction Aid Special Fund, to be administered by the Agency of Education. Monies in the Fund shall be used for the purposes of:

(1) awarding aid to school construction projects under section 3445 of this title;

(2) awarding grants through the Facilities Master Plan Grant Program established in section 3441 of this title;

(3) funding administrative costs of the State Aid for School Construction Program; and

(4) awarding emergency aid under section 3445 of this title.

(b) Funds. The Fund shall consist of:

(1) any amounts transferred or appropriated to it by the General Assembly; and

(2) any interest earned by the Fund.

Sec. 14. 16 V.S.A. § 3445 is added to read:

§ 3445. APPROVAL AND FUNDING OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

PROJECTS

(a) Construction aid.

(1) Preliminary application for construction aid. A school district eligible for assistance under section 3447 of this title that intends to construct or purchase a new school, or make extensive additions or alterations to its existing school, and desires to avail itself of State school construction aid shall submit a written preliminary application to the Secretary. A preliminary application shall include information required by the Agency by rule and shall specify the need for and purpose of the project.

(2) Approval of preliminary application.

(A) When reviewing a preliminary application for approval, the Secretary shall consider:

(i) regional educational opportunities and needs, including school building capacities across school district boundaries, and available infrastructure in neighboring communities;

(ii) economic efficiencies;

(iii) the suitability of an existing school building to continue to meet educational needs; and

(iv) statewide educational initiatives.

(B) The Secretary may approve a preliminary application if:

(i)(I) the project or part of the project fulfills a need occasioned by:

(aa) conditions that threaten the health or safety of students or employees;

(bb) facilities that are inadequate to provide programs required by State or federal law or regulation;

(cc) excessive energy use resulting from the design of a building or reliance on fossil fuels or electric space heat; or

(dd) deterioration of an existing building; or

(II) the project results in consolidation of two or more school buildings and will serve the educational needs of students in a more cost-effective and educationally appropriate manner as compared to individual projects constructed separately;

(ii) the need addressed by the project cannot reasonably be met by another means;

(iii) the proposed type, kind, quality, size, and estimated cost of the project are suitable for the proposed curriculum and meet all legal standards;

(iv) the applicant achieves the level of “proficiency” in the school district quality standards regarding facilities management adopted by rule by the Agency; and

(v) the applicant has completed a facilities master planning process that:

(I) engages robust community involvement;

(II) considers regional solutions;

(III) evaluates environmental contaminants; and

(IV) produces a facilities master plan that unites the applicant’s vision statement, educational needs, enrollment projections, renovation needs, and construction projects.

(3) Priorities. Following approval of a preliminary application and provided that the district has voted funds or authorized a bond for the total estimated cost of a project, the Agency, with the advice of the State Aid for School Construction Advisory Board, shall assign points to the project as prescribed by rule of the Agency so that the project can be placed on a priority list based on the number of points received.

(4) Request for legislative appropriation. The Agency shall submit its annual school construction funding request to the Governor as part of its

budget pursuant to subdivision 212(21) of this title. Following submission of the Governor's recommended budget to the General Assembly pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 306, the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education shall recommend a total school construction appropriation for the next fiscal year to the General Assembly.

(5) Final approval for construction aid.

(A) Unless approved by the Secretary for good cause in advance of commencement of construction, a school district shall not begin construction before the Secretary approves a final application. A school district may submit a written final application to the Secretary at any time following approval of a preliminary application.

(B) The Secretary may approve a final application for a project provided that:

(i) the project has received preliminary approval;

(ii) the district has voted funds or authorized a bond for the total estimated cost of the project;

(iii) the district has made arrangements for project construction supervision by persons competent in the building trades;

(iv) the district has provided for construction financing of the project during a period prescribed by the Agency;

(v) the project has otherwise met the requirements of this chapter;

(vi) if the proposed project includes a playground, the project includes a requirement that the design and construction of playground equipment follow the guidelines set forth in the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook for Public Playground Safety; and

(vii) if the total estimated cost of the proposed project is less than \$50,000.00, no performance bond or irrevocable letter of credit shall be required.

(C) The Secretary may provide that a grant for a high school project is conditioned upon the agreement of the recipient to provide high school instruction for any high school pupil living in an area prescribed by the Agency who may elect to attend the school.

(D) A district may begin construction upon receipt of final approval. However, a district shall not be reimbursed for debt incurred due to borrowing of funds in anticipation of aid under this section.

(6) Award of construction aid.

(A) The base amount of an award shall be 20 percent of the eligible debt service cost of a project. Projects are eligible for additional bonus incentives as specified in rule for up to an additional 20 percent of the eligible debt service cost.

(B) As used in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (6), “eligible debt service cost” of a project means the product of the lifetime cost of the bond authorized for the project and the ratio of the approved cost of a project to the total cost of the project.

(b) Emergency aid. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the Secretary may grant aid for a project the Secretary deems to be an emergency in the amount of 30 percent of eligible project costs, up to a maximum eligible total project cost of \$300,000.00.

Sec. 15. 16 V.S.A. § 3446 is added to read:

§ 3446. APPEAL

Any municipal corporation as defined in section 3447 of this title aggrieved by an order, allocation, or award of the Agency of Education may, within 30 days, appeal to the Superior Court in the county in which the project is located.

Sec. 16. TRANSFER OF RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; TRANSFER OF  
RULES

(a) The statutory authority to adopt rules by the State Board of Education pertaining to school construction and capital outlay adopted under 16 V.S.A. § 3448(e) and 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 is transferred from the State Board of Education to the Agency of Education.

(b) All rules pertaining to school construction and capital outlay adopted by the State Board of Education under 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 prior to July 1, 2026 shall be deemed the rules of the Agency of Education and remain in effect until amended or repealed by the Agency of Education pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25.

(c) The Agency of Education shall provide notice of the transfer to the Secretary of State and the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules in accordance with 3 V.S.A. § 848(d)(2).

Sec. 17. REPEALS

(a) 16 V.S.A. § 3448 (approval of funding of school construction projects; renewable energy) is repealed on July 1 2026.

(b) 16 V.S.A. § 3448a (appeal) is repealed on July 1, 2026.



Sec. 18. 16 V.S.A. § 828 is amended to read:

§ 828. TUITION TO APPROVED SCHOOLS; AGE; APPEAL

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

(1) a public school, located in Vermont;

(2) an approved independent school, that:

(A) is located in Vermont;

(B) is approved under section 166 of this title on or before July 1, 2025;

(C) has at least 51 percent of its student enrollment composed of students attending on a district-funded tuition basis pursuant to chapter 21 of this title as of July 1, 2025; and

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

(3) an independent school meeting education quality standards;

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

(5) an approved education program, or;

(6) ~~an independent school in another state or country approved under the laws of that state or country, that complies with the reporting requirement under subsection 4010(e) of this title, a public school located in another state;~~  
or

(7) a therapeutic approved independent school located in Vermont or another state or country that is approved under the laws of that state or country.

(b) ~~nor shall payment~~ Payment of tuition on behalf of a person shall not be denied on account of age.

(c) Unless otherwise provided, a person who is aggrieved by a decision of a school board relating to eligibility for tuition payments, the amount of tuition payable, or the school the person may attend, may appeal to the State Board and its decision shall be final.

(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.

#### Sec. 19. TUITION TRANSITION

A school district that pays tuition pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. chapter 21 in effect on June 30, 2025 shall continue to pay tuition on behalf of a resident student enrolled for the 2024–2025 school year in or who has been accepted for enrollment for the 2025–2026 school year by an approved independent school subject to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 828 in effect on June 30, 2025, until such time as the student graduates from that school.

\* \* \* Statewide Cohesion \* \* \*

#### Sec. 20. STATEWIDE COHESION; INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to consolidate structures and systems that are foundational to the administration of education.

#### Sec. 21. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; SCHOOL CALENDAR;

##### GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS; REPORT

(a) Statewide graduation requirements. On or before January 1, 2026, the Agency of Education shall recommend to the State Board of Education standards for statewide proficiency-based graduation requirements based on standards adopted by the State Board.

(b) Statewide school calendar.

(1) On or before January 15, 2027, the Secretary of Education shall develop and publish a statewide calendar for the public schools of the State, including career and technical centers, that shall be in effect in the 2028–2029 academic year and after.

(2) On or before January 15, 2027, the Secretary shall present to the House and Senate Committees on Education a list of the statutory amendments necessary to effect the intent of this subsection.

(c) Report. On or before December 1, 2025, the Agency of Education shall submit a written report and recommended legislative language, as applicable, to the House and Senate Committees on Education with the following:

(1) In consultation with educators and administrators, a proposed implementation plan for statewide financial data and student information systems.

(2) Recommendations for a school construction division within the Agency of Education, including position descriptions and job duties for each position within the division, a detailed description of the assistance the division would provide to the field, and the overall role the Agency would play within a State aid to school construction program.

(3) A progress report regarding the development of clear, unambiguous guidance that would be provided to school officials and school board members regarding the business processes and transactions that would need to occur to facilitate school district mergers into larger, consolidated school districts, including the merging of data systems, asset and liability transfers, and how to address collective bargaining agreements for both educators and staff. The report shall include a detailed description of how the Agency will provide support and consolidation assistance to the field in each of these areas and an estimate of the costs associated with such work.

(4) In consultation with superintendents, directors of therapeutic independent schools, special education directors, and, in the opinion of the Agency, other experts, recommendations for the need for cooperative education services and the oversight of therapeutic schools within the school governance framework both at a state and local level.

\* \* \* State-Level Governance \* \* \*

## Sec. 22. STATE-LEVEL GOVERNANCE; INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly to ensure that the State Board of Education is the independent, transparent, and public facing body for public education and to ensure the Board maintains its ability provide an important outlet for the public to engage in the rulemaking process and regularly provide public comment regarding the state of Vermont's education system.

Sec. 23. 16 V.S.A. § 161 is amended to read:

### § 161. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS; TERM; VACANCY

The State Board shall consist of ~~ten~~ 10 members. Two of the members shall be secondary students, one of whom shall be a full member and the other of whom shall be a junior member who may not vote. ~~All~~ Eight members shall be appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. One member shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House and one member shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees. In the appointment of the nonstudent members, priority shall be given to the selection of persons with a demonstrated commitment to ensuring quality education for Vermont students. To the extent possible, the members shall

represent the State's geographic, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. The Secretary shall serve on the State Board as a nonvoting member.

(1) Upon the expiration of the respective terms of those members of the Board previously appointed, excluding the student members, the ~~Governor~~ appointing authority that made the initial appointment to the expired term shall, biennially in the month of February with the advice and consent of the Senate, as applicable, appoint members for terms of six years. The terms shall begin March 1 of the year in which the appointments are made. A member serving a term of six years shall not be eligible for reappointment for successive terms.

(2) In the event of any vacancy occurring in the membership of the Board, the ~~Governor~~ appointing authority that made the initial appointment to the vacated term shall fill the vacancy with a qualified person whose appointment shall be for the unexpired portion of the term.

(3) Biennially, the Board shall choose a member of the Board to be its chair.

(4) Annually, using an application process that is open and accessible to all eligible students, the Governor shall appoint a Vermont secondary school student who will continue to be a secondary student for at least two years following taking office, to serve on the State Board for two years, beginning on July 1 of the year of appointment. The student member shall not vote during the first year and shall be a full and voting member during the second year of ~~his or her~~ the student's term.

#### Sec. 24. TRANSITION PERIOD APPOINTMENTS; STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(a) Members currently serving on the State Board of Education may continue to serve for the duration of the term to which they were appointed.

(b) Beginning on July 1, 2025, as terms of currently serving members expire, appointments of successors shall be made in accordance with the considerations and appointment authority contained in 16 V.S.A. § 161.

(1) The Speaker of the House shall make the first appointment to a vacant or expired seat that occurs after July 1, 2025 and shall make any subsequent appointments to fill the vacated or expired term for that same seat after the initial transition period appointment.

(2) The Senate Committee on Committees shall make the second appointment to a vacant or expired seat that occurs after July 1, 2025 and shall

make any subsequent appointments to fill the vacated or expired term for that same seat after the initial transition period appointment.

(3) The Governor shall make the third appointment, with the advice and consent of the Senate, to a vacant or expired seat that occurs after July 1, 2025 and shall make any subsequent appointments to fill the vacated or expired term for that same seat after the initial transition period appointment.

(c) Once the first three appointments after July 1, 2025 are made in accordance with subsection (b) of this section, the Governor shall make all subsequent appointments for the remaining five non-student seats, with the advice and consent of the Senate, in accordance with 16 V.S.A. § 161.

Sec. 25. 16 V.S.A. § 162 is amended to read:

#### § 162. REMOVAL OF BOARD MEMBERS

After notice and hearing, the Governor may remove a member of the State Board for incompetency, failure to discharge ~~his or her~~ the member's duties, malfeasance, illegal acts, or other cause inimical to the welfare of the public schools; and in case of such removal, ~~he or she~~ the appointing authority that made the initial appointment shall appoint a person to fill the unexpired term.

Sec. 26. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; REVIEW OF RULES;

#### APPROPRIATION

(a) The State Board of Education shall review each rule series the State Board is responsible for and make a determination as to the continuing need for, appropriateness of, or need for updating of said rules. On or before December 1, 2026, the State Board of Education shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education with its recommendation for rules that are no longer needed and a plan to update rules that are still necessary, including the order in which the Board proposes to update the rules and any associated costs or staffing needs.

(b) The sum of \$200,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2026 to provide the State Board of Education with the staffing and resources necessary to review and update the Board's rules.

\* \* \* Effective Dates \* \* \*

Sec. 27. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Secs. 1 (findings; intent; plan) and 2 (Commission on the Future of Public Education) shall take effect on passage.

(b) Secs. 3 (scale; intent), 6 (SBE rules; report), 7 (school size; intent), 8 (school closure), 11 (16 V.S.A. § 3443), 12 (school construction advisory board sunset), 18 (18 V.S.A. § 828), 19 (tuition transition), 20 (statewide cohesion; intent), 21 (AOE report; school calendar; graduation requirements), 22 (state-level governance; intent), 23 (16 V.S.A. § 161), 24 (SBE appointments transition), 25 (16 V.S.A. § 162), and 26 (SBE rule review; appropriation) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(c) Secs. 4 (class size minimums), 5 (failure to comply with class size minimums), 9 (school construction policy), 10 (16 V.S.A. § 3442), 13 (16 V.S.A. § 3444), 14 (16 V.S.A. § 3445), 15 (16 V.S.A. § 3446), 16 (transfer of rulemaking authority), and 17 (repeals) shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

**(Committee Vote: 7-4-0)**

### **For Informational Purposes**

#### **CROSSOVER DATES**

The Joint Rules Committee established the following crossover dates:

(1) All **Senate/House** bills must be reported out of the last committee of reference (including the Committees on Appropriations and Finance/Ways and Means, except as provided below in (2) and the exceptions listed below) on or before **Friday, March 14, 2025**, and filed with the Secretary/Clerk so they may be placed on the Calendar for Notice the next legislative day – Committee bills must be voted out of Committee by **Friday, March 14, 2025**.

(2) All **Senate/House** bills referred pursuant to Senate Rule 31 or House Rule 35(a) to the Committees on Appropriations and Finance/Ways and Means must be reported out by the last of those committees on or before **Friday, March 21, 2025**, and filed with the Secretary/Clerk so they may be placed on the Calendar for Notice the next legislative day.

**Exceptions to the foregoing deadlines include the major money bills (the general Appropriations bill (“The Big Bill”), the Transportation Capital bill, the Capital Construction bill, and the Fee/Revenue bills).**

#### **HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION (H.C.R.) PROCESS**

Joint Rules 16a–16d provide the procedure for the General Assembly to adopt concurrent resolutions pursuant to the Consent Calendar. Here are the steps for Representatives to introduce an H.C.R. and to have it ceremonially read during a House session:

1. Meet with Legislative Counselor Michael Chernick regarding your H.C.R. draft request. Come prepared with an idea and any relevant supporting documents.
2. Have a date in mind if you want a ceremonial reading. You should meet with Counselor Chernick at least two weeks prior to the week you want your ceremonial reading to happen.
3. Counselor Chernick will draft your H.C.R., and Resolutions Editor and Coordinator Jill Pralle will edit it. Upon completion of this process, a paper or electronic copy will be released to you. If a paper copy is released to you, a sponsor signout sheet will also be included.
4. Please submit the sponsor list to Counselor Chernick by paper *or* electronically, but not both.
5. The final list of sponsors needs to be submitted to Counselor Chernick not later than 12:00 noon the Thursday of the week prior to the H.C.R.'s appearance on the Consent Calendar.
6. The Office of Legislative Counsel will then send your H.C.R. to the House Clerk's Office for incorporation into the Consent Calendar and House Calendar Addendum for the following week.
7. The week that your H.C.R. is on the Consent Calendar, any presentation copies that you requested will be mailed or available for pickup on Friday, after the House and Senate adjourn, which is when your H.C.R. is adopted pursuant to Joint Rules.
8. Your H.C.R. can be ceremonially read during a House session once it is adopted. If you would like to schedule a ceremonial reading, contact Second Assistant Clerk Courtney Reckord to confirm your requested ceremonial reading date.

### **JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE NOTICES**

Grants and Positions that have been submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committee by the Administration, under 32 V.S.A. §5(b)(3)(D):

**JFO #3246:** 125+ acre land donation valued at \$184,830.00 from Pieter Van Schaik of Cavendish, VT to the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. The acreage will become part of the Lord State Forest. *[Received March 24, 2025]*

**JFO #3244:** \$2,335,401.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Health from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration. Funds support continued crisis counseling assistance and training in response to the July 2024 flood event. *[Received February 7, 2025]*

**JFO #3245:** \$250,000.00 to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Health from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. Funds used to provide trainings for crisis staff and to make improvements to the State's crisis system dispatch platform. *[Received February 7, 2025]*