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STATE OF VERMONT
House Committee on Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: House Committee on Appropriations
From: House Committee on Education
Date: February 27, 2025
Subject: FY26 Budget Recommendations

After review of budget requests for 2025, the House Committee on Education makes the following recommendations grouped in levels of support. All are supported by the committee:

VSAC, UVM, the Vermont State College System (CCV and VTSU), and the Vermont State Board of Education, have all put forth vital requests that we support as presented.

The committee very strongly supports the request of the state board of education in both one-time money to help it catch up on a backlog of work for which it receives little to no staff or legal support from the AOE, and for ongoing funding to provide legal services that are mostly unavailable from AOE. The funding would also increase the stipends for members to a number that better reflects the time and energy members put in at board meetings, committee meetings and with homework.

The work proposed by the SBE with this funding will also put the board in a much better position to take on whatever new role education transformation brings by not only cleaning out the backlog of work, but also reviewing all roles and responsibilities to bring them up to date for the board and the agency.

The committee strongly supports the base funding requests from VSAC, UVM and VSCS, all of which are in line with the Governor's ask. Additionally, we strongly support whatever funding can be applied to VSAC's teacher forgivable loan program, which has proven so successful that the one-time appropriation is gone and there is pent up demand from many.

The VSCS budget request includes a line item for maintenance at \$6,206,000, and we defer to House Institutions and Corrections to provide input.

The University of Vermont has requested a one-time \$1 million gift for a technology hub, and we believe that that request should be considered by the Commerce Committee. Additionally, UVM has requested \$5,000,000, \$1,000,000 each year for five years, for a Cancer Research center. We believe that the Healthcare Committee has jurisdiction there.

The Committee supports the AOE regular budget request, though with our annual caution that we remain concerned about agency capacity, especially to serve those working in the field. The committee discussed at length the line item for \$4,000,000 for Education Transformation funds. We believe additional funding is necessary to assist this monumental change and process, but we believe more questions need to be asked regarding the specific allocation of these funds and the timing of their use. We stand ready to work with our colleagues in HAC in probing the appropriate use of those funds more thoroughly.

Other budgetary requests for notable causes are: The Governor's Institute has requested 3% more than FY25. GIV continues to be a worthy organization and deserving of the standard 3 percent increase. We leave the Farm to School \$1 million request to the Agriculture Committee.

The committee supports the request from Hunger Free Vermont for \$182,000 and the assignment of AOE as the fiscal agent for this money to maintain the free food program for children in home-based child care programs. This program also draws down significant federal dollars.

We support correctly budgeted amounts and language for Adult Education in FY26 budget, rather than continued adjustments in the next BAA. Adult Ed needs sound financial footing. Requiring them to once again come in with a BAA request is contrary to the purpose of all of the changes we have been working through with AOE, the providers and the Legislature.

Advance Vermont is asking for a change from one-time requests to an annual base amount of \$350,000. The Committee believes this program continues to have great potential in directing high school students and others to further education and training that can result in filling key vacancies in the Vermont workforce. Advanced Vermont has had to exist on annual requests, which has hampered its ability to reach all Vermont students in a sustained way.