

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to which was
3 referred Senate Bill No. 122 entitled “An act relating to economic and
4 workforce development” respectfully reports that it has considered the same
5 and recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended
6 by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the
7 following:

8 Sec. 1. EXPANDING SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

9 (a) The Vermont Professionals of Color Network. Of monies appropriated
10 to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2026, \$200,000.00
11 shall be allocated to support The Vermont Professionals of Color Network’s
12 critical workforce and business development services it provides to BIPOC
13 business communities and to support its business technical assistance services,
14 which includes education on basic business practices, resource navigation, and
15 networking support to BIPOC small business owners.

16 (b) Business advising. Of monies appropriated to the Department of
17 Economic Development in fiscal year 2026, \$150,000.00 shall be allocated for
18 a grant to the Vermont Small Business Development Center for the purpose of
19 supporting the continuation of its work in helping Vermonters start, acquire,
20 and grow businesses. The funds shall also be used to continue its business

1 advising and educational workshops to meet increasing demands of
2 entrepreneurs and small business owners post pandemic.

3 (c) Creation of resource guide. Of monies appropriated to the Agency of
4 Commerce and Community Development in fiscal year 2026, in addition to
5 any other monies allocated to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund Program,
6 \$25,000.00 shall be allocated to the Program for purpose of creating a
7 definitive business resource guide directed towards small businesses. The
8 funds shall support the creation of a magazine-style annual guide featuring
9 profiles of Vermont business service organizations, an interactive website that
10 serves as the digital home for the guide’s content, and an artificial intelligence
11 platform that complements the website by including events, grants, programs,
12 and educational content. The guide, website, and artificial intelligence
13 platform supported by the appropriation made in this subsection shall be
14 completed on or before December 1, 2026.

15 Sec. 2. INTERNATIONAL TRADE DIVISION

16 Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in
17 fiscal year 2026, \$150,000.00 shall be allocated to the Department of
18 Economic Development for the purpose of continuing to support the
19 International Trade Division’s initiatives.

1 Sec. 3. TASK FORCE TO EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OF

2 CONVENTION CENTER AND PERFORMANCE VENUE

3 (a) Creation. There is created the Convention Center and Performance
4 Venue Task Force to study the feasibility of constructing a convention center
5 and performance venue in Vermont.

6 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following
7 members:

8 (1) one current member of the House of Representatives, who shall be
9 appointed by the Speaker of the House;

10 (2) one current member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the
11 Committee on Committees;

12 (3) the Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development or
13 designee;

14 (4) the President of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce or designee;

15 (5) the Chief Executive Officer of the Lake Champlain Chamber of
16 Commerce or designee;

17 (6) the President of the Vermont Regional Development Corporations or
18 designee; and

19 (7) the Chair of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development
20 Agencies or designee.

1 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force, in reviewing the feasibility of
2 constructing a convention center and performance venue in Vermont, shall:

3 (1) determine the ability of the State to support the projects through
4 appropriations, bonding, tax instruments, and other financial assistance;

5 (2) identify infrastructure improvements needed for the projects,
6 including water, sewer, transportation, lodging, and food;

7 (3) consider management and operational options for ownership,
8 maintenance, staffing, and related items for the projects;

9 (4) research the attributes of convention centers and performance venues
10 that have been recently and successfully developed in other states; and

11 (5) evaluate the economic impact and anticipated return on investment
12 of having a convention center and performance venue.

13 (d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,
14 and legal assistance of the Agency of Commerce and Community
15 Development.

16 (e) Reports. On or before November 1, 2025, the Task Force shall submit
17 an interim report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic
18 Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing
19 and General Affairs with an update on its work pursuant to subsection (c) of
20 this section. On or before November 1, 2026, the Task Force shall submit a
21 final written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic

1 Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing
2 and General Affairs with its findings and any recommendations for legislative
3 action.

4 (f) Meetings.

5 (1) The Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development or
6 designee shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before
7 July 15, 2025.

8 (2) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the
9 first meeting.

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

11 (4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on December 1, 2026.

12 (5) The Task Force shall meet not more than six times.

13 (g) Reimbursement.

14 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
15 Assembly, a legislative member of the Task Force serving in the member's
16 capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
17 reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than six
18 meetings.

19 (2) Other members of the Task Force shall be entitled to reimbursement
20 of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six
21 meetings.

1 (3) Payments to members of the Task Force authorized under this
2 subsection shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Fund.

3 Sec. 4. 9 V.S.A. chapter 111B is added to read:

4 CHAPTER 111B. TRADE COMMISSIONS

5 § 4129. VERMONT-IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

6 (a) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is established within the State
7 Treasurer's office to advance bilateral trade and investment between Vermont
8 and Ireland. The Commission shall consist of seven members as follows:

9 (1) two members, appointed by the Governor;

10 (2) two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

11 (3) two members, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees;

12 and

13 (4) the State Treasurer or designee.

14 (b) The purposes of the Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission are to:

15 (1) advance bilateral trade and investment between Vermont and
16 Ireland;

17 (2) initiate joint action on policy issues of mutual interest to Vermont
18 and Ireland;

19 (3) promote business and academic exchanges between Vermont and
20 Ireland;

21 (4) encourage mutual economic support between Vermont and Ireland;

1 (5) encourage mutual investment in the infrastructure of Vermont and
2 Ireland; and

3 (6) address other issues as determined by the Commission.

4 (c) The members of the Commission, except for the State Treasurer or
5 designee, shall be appointed for terms of four years each and shall continue to
6 serve until their successors are appointed, except that in order to achieve
7 staggered terms, the two members appointed by the Governor shall serve initial
8 terms of two years each and the two members appointed by the Speaker of the
9 House shall serve initial terms of three years each. Members may be
10 reappointed. A member serves at the pleasure of the member's appointing
11 authority. Not more than two members serving on the Commission may be
12 members of the General Assembly.

13 (d) A vacancy in the membership of the Commission shall be filled by the
14 relevant appointing authority within 90 days after the vacancy.

15 (e) The Commission shall select a chair from among its members at the
16 first meeting. The Chair, as appropriate, may appoint from among the
17 Commission members subcommittees or a subcommittee at the Chair's
18 discretion. A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a
19 quorum for purposes of transacting the business of the Commission.

20 (f) The Commission shall submit a written report with its findings, results,
21 and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly within one

1 year of its initial organizational meeting and on or before December 1 of each
2 succeeding year for the activities of the current calendar year. The report shall
3 also include a disclosure listing any in-kind contributions received by specific
4 members of the Commission through their work in the Commission in the
5 current calendar year.

6 (g) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is authorized to raise funds,
7 through direct solicitation or other fundraising events, alone or with other
8 groups, and accept donations, grants, and bequests from individuals,
9 corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private
10 organizations and institutions, to defray the Commission's administrative
11 expenses and to carry out its purposes as set forth in this chapter. The funds,
12 donations, grants, or bequests received pursuant to this chapter shall be
13 deposited in a bank account and allocated annually by the State Treasurer's
14 office to defray the Commission's administrative expenses and carry out its
15 purposes. Any monies so withdrawn shall not be used for any purpose other
16 than the payment of expenses under this chapter. Interest earned shall remain
17 in the bank account.

18 Sec. 5. INITIAL APPOINTMENT DEADLINE FOR VERMONT-IRELAND
19 TRADE COMMISSION

20 Initial appointments to the Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission shall be
21 made not later than October 1, 2025.

1 Sec. 6. REPEAL; VERMONT-IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

2 9 V.S.A. § 4129 (Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission) as added by this act
3 is repealed on June 30, 2030.

4 Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 540 is amended to read:

5 § 540. WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT AND
6 TRAINING ~~LEADER~~ LEADERS

7 (a) The Commissioner of Labor and the Executive Director of the Office of
8 Workforce Strategy and Development shall be the ~~leader~~ leaders of workforce
9 education and employment and training in the State; and shall have the
10 authority and responsibility for the coordination of ~~workforce education and~~
11 ~~training within State government, including the following duties: the State's~~
12 workforce system as provided in this section.

13 (b) The powers and duties provided in this section shall not limit, restrict,
14 or suspend any similar powers the Commissioner of Labor or the Executive
15 Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and Development may have
16 under other provisions of law.

17 (c) For purposes of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
18 (WIOA), the Department of Labor shall be designated as the State Workforce
19 Agency and the Commissioner of Labor shall serve as the State Workforce
20 Administrator.

1 (d) As co-leader of workforce education and employment and training in
2 the State, the Commissioner of Labor, in consultation with the Executive
3 Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and Development where
4 appropriate, shall:

5 ~~(1) Perform the following duties in consultation with the State~~
6 ~~Workforce Development Board:~~ ensure the coordination and administration of
7 workforce education and employment and training programs operated by the
8 Department of Labor;

9 ~~(A) advise the Governor on the establishment of an integrated system~~
10 ~~of workforce education and training for Vermont;~~

11 ~~(B) create and maintain an inventory of all existing workforce~~
12 ~~education and training programs and activities in the State;~~

13 ~~(C) use data to ensure that State workforce education and training~~
14 ~~activities are aligned with the needs of the available workforce, the current and~~
15 ~~future job opportunities in the State, and the specific credentials needed to~~
16 ~~achieve employment in those jobs;~~

17 ~~(D) develop a State plan, as required by federal law, to ensure that~~
18 ~~workforce education and training programs and activities in the State serve~~
19 ~~Vermont citizens and businesses to the maximum extent possible;~~

20 ~~(E) ensure coordination and nonduplication of workforce education~~
21 ~~and training activities;~~

1 ~~(F) identify best practices and gaps in the delivery of workforce~~
2 ~~education and training programs;~~

3 ~~(G) design and implement criteria and performance measures for~~
4 ~~workforce education and training activities;~~

5 ~~(H) establish goals for the integrated workforce education and training~~
6 ~~system; and~~

7 ~~(I) with the assistance of the Secretaries of Commerce and~~
8 ~~Community Development, of Human Services, of Education, of Agriculture,~~
9 ~~Food and Markets, and of Transportation and of the Commissioner of Public~~
10 ~~Safety, develop and implement a coordinated system to recruit, relocate, and~~
11 ~~train workers to ensure the labor force needs of Vermont's businesses are met.~~

12 ~~(2) Require from each business, training provider, or program that~~
13 ~~receives State funding to conduct workforce education and training a report~~
14 ~~that evaluates the results of the training. Each recipient shall submit its report~~
15 ~~on a schedule determined by the Commissioner and shall include at least the~~
16 ~~following information: enter into agreements, to the extent necessary, with~~
17 ~~other State agencies and departments for services to improve the employment~~
18 ~~and economic outcomes for individuals receiving public assistance, including~~
19 ~~agreements to provide customized or specialized services that are beyond the~~
20 ~~basic services required by federal law;~~

21 ~~(A) name of the person who receives funding;~~

- 1 ~~(B) amount of funding;~~
- 2 ~~(C) activities and training provided;~~
- 3 ~~(D) number of trainees and their general description;~~
- 4 ~~(E) employment status of trainees; and~~
- 5 ~~(F) future needs for resources.~~

6 (3) ~~Review reports submitted by each recipient of workforce education~~
7 ~~and training funding. develop strategies and provide support to entities~~
8 ~~responsible for federal investments in the State’s workforce system;~~

9 ~~(4)(A) Issue an annual report to the Governor, the House Committees on~~
10 ~~Appropriations and on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate~~
11 ~~Committees on Appropriations and on Economic Development, Housing and~~
12 ~~General Affairs on or before December 1 that includes a systematic evaluation~~
13 ~~of the accomplishments of the State workforce investment system and the~~
14 ~~performance of participating agencies and institutions. The provisions of 2~~
15 ~~V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to~~
16 ~~be made under this subdivision. develop strategies designed to reduce~~
17 ~~employee layoffs and business closures; and~~

18 ~~(B) provide reemployment services to employees affected by layoffs~~
19 ~~and closures;~~

20 (5) ~~Coordinate public and private workforce programs to ensure that~~
21 ~~information is easily accessible to students, employees, and employers, and~~

1 ~~that all information and necessary counseling is available through one contact.~~
2 administer a system where employment and training resources are provided to
3 individuals and businesses through both physical and virtual service delivery
4 methods;

5 (6) ~~Facilitate effective communication between the business community~~
6 ~~and public and private educational institutions.~~ establish job centers in such
7 parts of the State as the Commissioner deems necessary and evaluate such
8 centers on an as-needed basis;

9 (7) maintain a free and secure electronic job board that, to the extent
10 practicable, compiles all available job, registered apprenticeship, education and
11 training, and credentialing opportunities that support job seekers and career
12 advancers;

13 ~~(7)(8) Notwithstanding any provision of State law to the contrary, and to~~
14 ~~the fullest extent allowed under federal law, ensure that in each State and~~
15 ~~State-funded workforce education and training program, the program~~
16 ~~administrator collects and reports data and results at the individual level by~~
17 ~~Social Security number or an equivalent.~~ use data to ensure that State
18 workforce education and employment and training activities are aligned with
19 the needs of the:

20 (A) available workforce;

21 (B) employers to fill their current and future job openings; and

1 (C) specific credentials required by employers;

2 ~~(8)(9) Coordinate intentional outreach and connections between students~~
3 ~~graduating from Vermont's colleges and universities and employment~~
4 ~~opportunities in Vermont.~~ require that each business, training provider, or other
5 entity receiving State funding to conduct workforce training submit a report
6 that evaluates the results of the training; and

7 (10) notwithstanding any provision of State law to the contrary, and to
8 the fullest extent allowed under federal law, ensure that the program
9 administrator in each State and State-funded workforce education and
10 employment and training program collects and reports data and results at the
11 individual level by Social Security number or equivalent.

12 (e) As co-leader of workforce education and employment and training in
13 the State, the Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and
14 Development, in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor and the State
15 Workforce Development Board where appropriate, shall:

16 (1) advise the Governor and members of the Governor's cabinet on the
17 establishment and management of an integrated system of workforce education
18 and training in Vermont;

19 (2) coordinate across public and private sectors to identify and address
20 labor force needs and ensure that workforce development program information
21 is easily accessible to students, employees, and businesses;

1 (3) develop a comprehensive workforce strategy that contains
2 measurable statewide workforce goals along with a biennial operational plan to
3 achieve those goals that shall:

4 (A) be developed in collaboration with, and representative of,
5 workforce system partners, including public, private, nonprofit, and
6 educational sectors and the State Workforce Development Board;

7 (B) include a set of metrics, designed in consultation with the Agency
8 of Administration’s Chief Performance Office, used to evaluate the
9 effectiveness of, to the extent practicable, all workforce development
10 programs;

11 (C) align with and build upon other required strategic planning
12 efforts, including the WIOA State Plan;

13 (D) be informed by the inventory system as set forth in subdivision
14 (4) of this subsection (e); and

15 (E) be reviewed and updated as necessary, but at least once every two
16 years;

17 (4) create, maintain, and update a publicly accessible inventory of all
18 known workforce education and employment and training programs and
19 activities in the State in order to:

20 (A) annually assess the investments and effectiveness of the
21 workforce development system;

1 (B) ensure coordination and nonduplication of workforce education
2 and employment and training activities; and

3 (C) identify best practices and gaps in the delivery of workforce
4 education and employment and training programs;

5 (5) identify and manage priority projects specific to regional workforce
6 needs;

7 (6) facilitate effective communication between the business community,
8 State and local government, and public and private educational institutions, for
9 the purpose of workforce pipeline development and job placement;

10 (7) coordinate intentional outreach and connections between students
11 and employment opportunities in the State; and

12 (8) ensure the State Workforce Development Board is carrying out its
13 duties and responsibilities as set forth in section 541a of this chapter.

14 (f)(1) The Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and
15 Development shall, once every two years, issue a comprehensive biennial
16 workforce report to the Governor, the House Committees on Appropriations
17 and on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate Committees on
18 Appropriations and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs,
19 on or before December 1, that includes an evaluation of the accomplishments
20 of the State workforce investment system and the performance of participating
21 agencies and institutions covering the previous two calendar years. The report

1 shall include identification of system priorities, need for future funding
2 requests, identification of proposed legislative and administrative changes, and
3 any other information relevant to the performance and future needs of the
4 workforce investment system. The report shall summarize performance and
5 outcome information submitted by federally and State-funded workforce
6 development and investment programs for all public and nonpublic programs.

7 (2) To the extent practicable, workforce reports required of the
8 Department of Labor, including the apprenticeship report required by 21
9 V.S.A. § 1113(e)(2), shall be incorporated into the comprehensive report
10 required by subdivision (1) of this subsection.

11 (3) The Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and
12 Development shall have the support and coordination of the Department of
13 Labor in developing and submitting the biennial report required by subdivision
14 (1) of this subsection.

15 (4) The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports)
16 shall not apply to the report to be made under subdivision (1) of this
17 subsection.

18 **Sec. 8. BABY BONDS PILOT PROGRAM**

19 (a) The Office of the State Treasurer is authorized to commence a five-year
20 pilot program to evaluate the impact, effectiveness, and operational necessities
21 of a permanent program under 3 V.S.A. chapter 20. The Treasurer shall design

1 a pilot program modeled on the Vermont Baby Bond Trust created in 3 V.S.A.
2 chapter 20, which may include taking the following actions:

- 3 (1) establishing and appointing members to an advisory committee;
4 (2) identifying research and evaluation partners;
5 (3) evaluating eligibility criteria for recipients and the final selection of
6 recipients;
7 (4) establishing performance metrics and reporting requirements;
8 (5) working with an investment consultant to create an investment plan
9 and guidance for pilot program funds;
10 (6) creating partnerships with organizations around the State to support
11 the pilot program and provide feedback on wrap-around services; and
12 (7) conducting outreach to potential recipients.

13 (b) Annually on or before January 15 of each year through 2030, the
14 Treasurer shall submit a report to the Senate Committee on Economic
15 Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committee on
16 Commerce and Economic Development detailing:

- 17 (1) the activities, operations, receipts, disbursements, earnings, and
18 expenditures of the pilot program during the preceding calendar year;
19 (2) differences between the pilot program and the permanent program
20 under 3 V.S.A. chapter 20 in eligible recipients and amounts invested; and
21 (3) any other information the Treasurer deems appropriate.

1 (c) On or before January 15, 2031, the Treasurer shall submit a report to the
2 Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
3 and the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
4 summarizing the pilot program, including recipient demographics, income
5 levels, geographic location of recipients, recipient behavioral changes, and
6 recipient access to wrap-around services.

7 **Sec. 9. BABY BONDS PILOT SPECIAL FUND**

8 (a) There is created the Baby Bonds Pilot Special Fund, to be administered
9 by the Office of the State Treasurer. The Fund shall consist of all gifts,
10 donations, and grants from any source, public or private, dedicated for deposit
11 into the Fund for purposes of the Baby Bond Pilot Program. Monies in the
12 Fund shall be used for the purposes of providing funds to recipients under the
13 Program and to fund administrative costs of the Program.

14 (b) Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of 32 V.S.A. chapter 7,
15 subchapter 5, unexpended balances and any earnings shall remain in the Fund
16 from year to year.

17 (c) The Treasurer may invest monies in the Fund in accordance with the
18 provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 434.

19 (d) The Fund shall terminate upon completion of the Program.

20 **Sec. 10. 3 V.S.A. § 609 is amended to read:**

21 **§ 609. IMPLEMENTATION; ~~PILOT PROGRAM~~**

