

1 S.327

2 Introduced by Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General

3 Affairs

4 Date: January 30, 2026

5 Subject: Commerce and trade; conservation and development; economic

6 development; business growth; task force; VEGI

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to increase the
8 downtown and village center tax credit program to \$5,000,000.00 annually;
9 expand services to small businesses by allocating funds that will support the
10 Vermont Law and Graduate School's business law center, increase business
11 advising with the Vermont Small Business Development Center, and support
12 the Vermont's Community Action Partnership's microbusinesses development
13 program; allocate funds to support the International Business Office,
14 brownfields remediation and redevelopment, and a comprehensive outdoor
15 study by Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative; create a task
16 force to study business development in Vermont; and repeal the prospective
17 repeal of the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive program.

18 An act relating to economic development

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

2 ~~Sec. 1. PURPOSE~~

3 ~~This act proposes to strengthen and support Vermont's businesses and~~
4 ~~promote long-term economic growth by investing in the economic~~
5 ~~development and vitality of its downtowns and village centers, providing key~~
6 ~~financial support, technical assistance, and incentives for Vermont businesses~~
7 ~~of all sizes and at all stages of development.~~

8 Sec. 2. 32 V.S.A. chapter 151, subchapter 11J is amended to read:

9 Subchapter 11J. Vermont Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Program

10 * * *

11 § 5930ee. LIMITATIONS

12 Beginning in fiscal year 2010 and thereafter, the State Board may award tax
13 credits to all qualified applicants under this subchapter, provided that:

14 (1) the total amount of tax credits awarded annually, together with sales
15 tax reallocated under section 9819 of this title, does not exceed \$3,000,000.00
16 \$5,000,000.00;

17 (2) a total annual allocation of ~~no~~ not more than 30 percent of these tax
18 credits in combination with sales tax reallocation may be awarded in
19 connection with all of the projects in a single municipality;

20 (3) façade tax credits shall not be available for projects that qualify for
21 ~~the federal rehabilitation tax credit~~

1 ~~(1) no credit shall be allowed under this subchapter for the cost of~~
2 ~~acquiring any building or interest in a building;~~

3 ~~(5) credit under any one subsection of 5930cc of this subchapter may~~
4 ~~not be allocated more often than once every two years with respect to the same~~
5 ~~building; and~~

6 ~~(6) credit awarded under section 5930cc of this subchapter that is~~
7 ~~rescinded or recaptured by the State Board shall be available for the State~~
8 ~~Board to award to applicants in any subsequent year, in addition to the total~~
9 ~~amount of tax credits authorized under this section.~~

10 * * *

11 Sec. 3. EXPANDING SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

12 (a) Expanding legal services. Of monies appropriated to the Department of
13 Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$300,000.00 shall be allocated for
14 the purpose of supporting the Vermont Law and Graduate School's public
15 education offerings and free legal support to small businesses through its
16 Vermont Small Business Law Center, which include:

17 (1) individual and group educational trainings and consultations;

18 (2) an ongoing webinar series on legal basics for startups; and

19 (3) an attorney referral program.

20 (b) Business advising. Of monies appropriated to the Department of

21 ~~Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$680,000.00 shall be allocated for~~

1 ~~a grant to the Vermont Small Business Development Center for the purpose of~~
2 supporting the continuation of its work in helping Vermonters start, acquire,
3 and grow businesses. The funds shall also be used to increase business
4 advising and educational workshops to meet increasing demands of
5 entrepreneurs and small business owners post pandemic. This increase of
6 \$300,000.00 from the Governor's suggested budget will allow the Center to
7 serve an additional 200 Vermont entrepreneurs and business owners through
8 no-fee, one-to-one advising to help them start businesses, add and retain jobs,
9 increase sales, export products, and prepare their ownership succession plan to
10 transfer ownership for the business to continue to operate in Vermont.

11 (c) Microbusiness support. Of monies appropriated to the Department for
12 Children and Families in fiscal year 2027, \$594,000.00 shall be allocated to
13 the Office of Economic Opportunity for the purpose of supporting the Vermont
14 Community Action Partnership's microbusiness development program.

15 Sec. 4. VERMONT OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC

16 COLLABORATIVE

17 Of monies appropriated to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
18 in fiscal year 2027, \$200,000.00 is allocated to the Vermont Outdoor
19 Recreation Economic Collaborative to conduct a comprehensive outdoor
20 ~~recreation economic impact study that will provide the State with information~~

1 ~~on how it can better support and benefit from the \$2.1 billion dollar outdoor~~
2 ~~recreation industry.~~

3 Sec. 5. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OFFICE; APPROPRIATION

4 Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in
5 fiscal year 2027, \$150,000.00 shall be allocated to the International Business
6 Office for the purpose of continuing to support the Office's initiatives.

7 Sec. 6. BROWNFIELDS ALLOCATION

8 Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in
9 fiscal year 2027, \$3,000,000.00 shall be allocated for brownfields remediation
10 and redevelopment.

11 Sec. 7. BUSINESS RESOURCES STUDY

12 The Commissioner of Economic Development and the Commissioner of
13 Tourism and Marketing, in consultation with stakeholders, shall:

14 (1) identify the in-state and out-of-state resources available to businesses
15 at each stage of development, including start-up, early-stage, middle-stage, and
16 mature businesses;

17 (2) determine how the resources identified in subdivision (1) of this
18 section are currently promoted and marketed to businesses; and

19 (3) provide a written report summarizing the findings made pursuant to
20 this section to the Business Development Task Force set forth in Sec. 8 of this

21 ~~act on or before October 1, 2026.~~

1 ~~Sec. 8. TASK FORCE TO ADDRESS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN~~

2 ~~VERMONT; REPORT~~

3 ~~(a) Creation. There is created the Business Development Task Force for~~
4 ~~the purpose of identifying how Vermont can better enable and support business~~
5 ~~growth through every stage of development. The Task Force shall identify:~~

6 ~~(1) what resources are currently available to businesses at all stages of~~
7 ~~development and what additional resources are needed to promote growth;~~

8 ~~(2) how Vermont can improve access to capital for small businesses; and~~

9 ~~(3) how to improve succession planning for mature businesses.~~

10 ~~(b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following~~
11 ~~members:~~

12 ~~(1) one current member of the House of Representatives, who shall be~~
13 ~~appointed by the Speaker of the House;~~

14 ~~(2) one current member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the~~
15 ~~Committee on Committees;~~

16 ~~(3) the State Treasurer or designee;~~

17 ~~(4) the Commissioner of Economic Development or designee;~~

18 ~~(5) the Executive Director of the Vermont Small Business Development~~
19 ~~Center or designee;~~

20 ~~(6) the Executive Director of the Vermont Community Action~~

21 ~~Partnership or designee;~~

- 1 ~~(7) the President of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce or designee;~~
- 2 (8) the Executive Director of the Vermont Futures Project or designee;
- 3 ~~(9) the Chief Executive Officer of Hula or designee;~~
- 4 (10) the President of the Vermont Regional Development Corporations
- 5 or designee; and
- 6 (11) three members, appointed by the Governor, as follows:
- 7 (A) a business owner of a start-up company;
- 8 (B) a business owner or manager of a middle-stage company; and
- 9 (C) a business owner or manager of a mature company.
- 10 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force, in determining how to better
- 11 enable business growth and development in Vermont, shall do the following:
- 12 (1) analyze the report sent by the Commissioner of Economic
- 13 Development and the Commissioner of Tourism and Marketing pursuant to
- 14 Sec. 7 of this act;
- 15 (2) based upon the analysis conducted pursuant to subdivision (1) of this
- 16 subsection:
- 17 (A) create an inventory of resources that would serve businesses for
- 18 each stage of development; and
- 19 (B) determine, in consultation with stakeholders, how best to market
- 20 and communicate the inventory of resources created pursuant to subdivision
- 21 ~~(A) of this subdivision (2) to Vermonters and the business community;~~

- 1 ~~(3) determine the State's role in accessing capital, including:~~
- 2 ~~(A) the investment environment in the New England region;~~
- 3 ~~(B) the availability of tax credits to leverage private capital; and~~
- 4 ~~(C) ensuring support of the current Tech Hub designation;~~
- 5 ~~(4) identify ways to offer investor education to high net worth~~
- 6 ~~individuals interested in investing in Vermont businesses; and~~
- 7 ~~(5) address any other related issues as determined by the Task Force.~~
- 8 ~~(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,~~
- 9 ~~and legal assistance of the Agency of Commerce and Community~~
- 10 ~~Development and the technical assistance of the Joint Fiscal Office.~~
- 11 ~~(e) Reports. On or before November 15, 2026, the Task Force shall submit~~
- 12 ~~an interim report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic~~
- 13 ~~Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing~~
- 14 ~~and General Affairs with an update on its work pursuant to subsection (c) of~~
- 15 ~~this section. On or before November 15, 2027, the Task Force shall submit a~~
- 16 ~~final written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic~~
- 17 ~~Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing~~
- 18 ~~and General Affairs with its findings and any recommendations for legislative~~
- 19 ~~action.~~
- 20 ~~(f) Meetings.~~

1 (1) The legislative members of the Task Force shall call the first
2 meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2026.

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

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

6 (4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on December 31, 2027.

7 (g) Compensation and reimbursement.

8 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
9 Assembly, a legislative member of the Task Force serving in the member's
10 capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
11 reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than eight
12 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
13 General Assembly.

14 (2) Other members of the Task Force shall be entitled to reimbursement
15 of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than eight
16 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
17 Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

18 Sec. 9. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 65, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

19 Sec. 3. TASK FORCE TO EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OF
20 CONVENTION CENTER AND PERFORMANCE VENUE

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~~(f) Meetings~~

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~~(5) The Task Force shall meet not more than six 14 times.~~

~~* * *~~

Sec. 10. 2016 Act and Resolves No. 157, Sec. H.12, as amended by 2022
Acts and Resolves No. 164, Sec. 5, 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 72, Sec. 39,
and 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 176, Sec. 1, is further amended to read:

Sec. H.12. ~~VEGI; REPEAL OF AUTHORITY TO AWARD~~
~~INCENTIVES~~

~~Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the Vermont
Economic Progress Council shall not accept or approve an application for a
Vermont Employment Growth Incentive under 32 V.S.A. chapter 105,
subchapter 2 on or after January 1, 2027. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 11. 32 V.S.A. chapter 105, subchapter 2 is amended to read:

Subchapter 2. Vermont Employment Growth Incentive Program
§ 3330. PURPOSE; FORM OF INCENTIVES; ENHANCED INCENTIVES;
ELIGIBLE APPLICANT

1 ~~(b) Form of incentives; enhanced incentives~~

2 (1) The Vermont Economic Progress Council may approve an incentive
3 under this subchapter in the form of a direct cash payment in annual
4 installments.

5 (2) The Council may approve the following enhanced incentives:

6 (A) an enhanced incentive for a business in a labor market area with
7 higher than average unemployment or lower than average wages pursuant to
8 section 3334 of this title; and

9 (B) an enhanced incentive for an environmental technology business
10 pursuant to section 3335 of this title; and

11 (C) [Repealed.]

12 (D) an enhanced incentive for an employee-owned business pursuant
13 to section 3335a of this title.

14 * * *

15 § 3331. DEFINITIONS

16 * * *

17 (9) "Qualifying job" means a new, permanent position in Vermont that
18 meets each of the following criteria:

19 (A) The position is filled by:

20 (i) a non-owner employee who regularly works at least 35 hours

21 each week, or

1 ~~(ii) an employee of an employee-owned business, pursuant to~~
2 ~~section 3335a of this title, who regularly works at least 35 hours each week.~~

3 * * *

4 § 3333. CALCULATING THE VALUE OF AN INCENTIVE

5 Except as otherwise provided for an enhanced incentive for a business in a
6 qualifying labor market area ~~under~~ pursuant to section 3334 of this title ~~or~~, an
7 enhanced incentive for an environmental technology business ~~under~~ pursuant
8 to section 3335 of this title, ~~or an enhanced incentive for an employee-owned~~
9 business pursuant to section 3335a of this title, the Council shall calculate the
10 value of an incentive for an award year as follows:

11 (1) Calculate new revenue growth. To calculate new revenue growth,
12 the Council shall use the cost-benefit model created pursuant to section 3326
13 of this title to determine the amount by which the new revenue generated by
14 the proposed economic activity to the State exceeds the costs of the activity to
15 the State.

16 (2) Calculate the business's potential share of new revenue growth.
17 Except as otherwise provided for an environmental technology business ~~in~~
18 pursuant to section 3335 of this title ~~or an employee-owned business pursuant~~
19 to section 3335a of this title, to calculate the business's potential share of new
20 revenue growth, the Council shall multiply the new revenue growth
21 ~~determined under subdivision (1) of this subsection by 80 percent.~~

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2 § 3335. ENHANCED INCENTIVE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
3 TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS

4 * * *

5 § 3335a. ENHANCED INCENTIVE FOR EMPLOYEE-OWNED
6 BUSINESSES

7 (a) As used in this section, “employee-owned business” means the
8 following:

9 (1) an “employee stock ownership plan,” which means an employee
10 stock ownership plan as defined in 26 U.S.C. § 4975(e)(7), as may be
11 amended; or

12 (2) a “worker cooperative,” which means:

13 (A) an eligible worker-owned cooperative as defined in 26 U.S.C.
14 § 1042(c), as may be amended;

15 (B) a worker cooperative organized under 11 V.S.A. chapter 8; or

16 (C) an organization that meets the following criteria:

17 (i) employees of the organization constitute a majority of
18 its membership;

19 (ii) members of the organization hold a majority of the
20 voting power;

1 ~~(iii) members of the organization have the authority to elect a~~
2 majority of the board of directors on the basis of one person, one vote; and

3 (iv) the organization allocates a majority of its allocated earnings
4 and losses to members on the basis of:

5 (I) patronage;

6 (II) capital contributions; or

7 (III) a combination of subdivisions (I) and (II) of this
8 subdivision (2)(C)(iv); and

9 (3) seeks an incentive for economic activity in Vermont pursuant to this
10 subchapter.

11 (b) The Council shall consider and administer an application from an
12 employee-owned business pursuant to the provisions of this subchapter, except
13 that:

14 (1) the business's potential share of new revenue growth shall be 90
15 percent; and

16 (2) to calculate qualifying payroll, the Council shall:

17 (A) determine the background growth rate in payroll for the
18 applicable business sector in the award year;

19 (B) multiply the business's full-time payroll for the award year by 20
20 percent of the background growth rate; and

1 ~~(C) subtract the product from the payroll performance requirement~~
2 ~~for the award year.~~

3 ~~(c) The purpose of the enhanced incentive for employee-owned businesses~~
4 ~~is to support the growth of those locally owned and controlled businesses,~~
5 ~~which typically provide higher wages and benefits to their employees.~~

6 * * *

7 Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATES

8 ~~This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, except that this section (effective~~
9 ~~dates) and Sec. 9 (convention center task force) shall take effect on passage.~~

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

This act proposes to strengthen and support Vermont's businesses and promote long-term economic growth by investing in the economic development and vitality of its downtowns and village centers, providing key financial support, technical assistance, and incentives for Vermont businesses of all sizes and at all stages of development. This act also requires the Commissioner of Economic Development to research and create an inventory of the resources available to businesses to assist with growth and development, the Office of Workforce Strategy and Development to study the feasibility of establishing a new culinary institute in the State, and the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies to study the short- and long-term solutions to better connect the economies of New York and Vermont.

~~Sec. 2. 32 V.S.A. chapter 15J, subchapter 11J is amended to read:~~

~~Subchapter 11J. Vermont Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Program~~

~~* * *~~

§ 5930ee. LIMITATIONS

Beginning in fiscal year 2010 and thereafter, the State Board may award tax credits to all qualified applicants under this subchapter, provided that:

(1) the total amount of tax credits awarded annually, together with sales tax reallocated under section 9819 of this title, does not exceed \$5,000,000.00
~~\$1,000,000.00 \$3,500,000.00.~~

~~(2) a total annual allocation of ~~no~~ not more than 50 percent of these tax credits in combination with sales tax reallocation may be awarded in connection with all of the projects in a single municipality;~~

~~(3) façade tax credits shall not be available for projects that qualify for the federal rehabilitation tax credit;~~

~~(4) no credit shall be allowed under this subchapter for the cost of acquiring any building or interest in a building;~~

~~(5) credit under any one subsection of 5930cc of this subchapter may not be allocated more often than once every two years with respect to the same building; and~~

~~(6) credit awarded under section 5930cc of this subchapter that is rescinded or recaptured by the State Board shall be available for the State Board to award to applicants in any subsequent year, in addition to the total amount of tax credits authorized under this section.~~

~~***~~

~~Sec 2. [Deleted.]~~

~~Sec. 3. EXPANDING SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES~~

~~(a) Expanding legal services. Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$100,000.00 shall be allocated for the purpose of supporting the Vermont Law and Graduate School's public education offerings and free legal support to small businesses through its Vermont Small Business Law Center, which include:~~

~~(1) individual and group educational trainings and consultations;~~

~~(2) an ongoing webinar series on legal basics for startups; and~~

~~(3) an attorney referral program.~~

~~(b) Business advising. Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$550,000.00 shall be allocated for a grant to the Vermont Small Business Development Center for the purpose of supporting the continuation of its work in helping Vermonters start, acquire, and grow businesses. The funds shall also be used to increase business advising and educational workshops to meet increasing demands of entrepreneurs and small business owners post pandemic. This increase of \$150,000.00 from the Governor's suggested budget will allow the Center to serve an additional 200 Vermont entrepreneurs and business owners through no fee, one to one advising to help them start businesses, add and retain jobs,~~

~~increase sales, export products, and prepare their ownership succession plan to transfer ownership for the business to continue to operate in Vermont.~~

~~(c) Microbusiness support. Of monies appropriated to the Department for Children and Families in fiscal year 2027, \$594,000.00 shall be allocated to the Office of Economic Opportunity for the purpose of supporting the Vermont Community Action Partnership's microbusiness development program.~~

~~(d) The Vermont Professionals of Color Network. Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$200,000.00 shall be allocated for a grant to the Vermont Professionals of Color Network in its support of critical workforce and business development services it provides to BIPOC business communities and to support its business technical assistance services, which includes education on basic business practices, resource navigation, and networking support to BIPOC small business owners.~~

Sec 3. [Deleted.]

~~Sec. 4. VERMONT OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC COLLABORATIVE~~

~~Of monies appropriated to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in fiscal year 2027, \$200,000.00 is allocated to the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative to conduct a comprehensive outdoor recreation economic impact study that will provide the State with information on how it can better support and benefit from the \$2.1 billion dollar outdoor recreation industry.~~

Sec 4. [Deleted.]

~~Sec. 5. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OFFICE, APPROPRIATION~~

~~Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$150,000.00 shall be allocated to the International Business Office for the purpose of continuing to support the Office's initiatives and to determine what additional supports are needed, if any, to further develop the economic relationship between Vermont and Taiwan.~~

Sec 5. [Deleted.]

~~Sec. 6. BROWNFIELDS ALLOCATION~~

~~Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$3,000,000.00 shall be allocated for brownfields remediation and redevelopment.~~

Sec 6. [Deleted.]

Sec. 7. BUSINESS RESOURCES AND GROWTH; INVENTORY; STUDY;

REPORT

(a) Business growth and development study. The Commissioner of Economic Development, in consultation with ~~stakeholders~~ stakeholders, including representatives of employee-owned businesses, for the purpose of determining how the State can better enable and support the growth of Vermont businesses, shall:

(1) clearly define each stage of business development in order to provide business leaders, investors, and the General Assembly with an understanding of the resources businesses need at each stage of development;

(2) identify the public and private resources available to businesses and determine how the resources are currently communicated to businesses;

(3) create an inventory of resources, pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection, that would serve businesses for each stage of development;

(4) determine how best to market and communicate the inventory of resources created pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection to Vermonters and the business community;

(5) determine how to improve succession planning for mature businesses;

(6) identify what resources are available to businesses to access capital;

(7) determine the state of capital access opportunities, including the:

(A) investment environment in Vermont and the New England region;

(B) availability of tax credits to leverage private capital; and

(C) requirements to maintain Vermont's Tech Hub designation; and

(8) identify investor education opportunities for high net worth individuals interested in investing in Vermont businesses.

(b) Report. On or before December 15, 2026, the Commissioner shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs with the Commissioner's findings pursuant to the business resources and growth study set forth in this section along with any recommendations for legislative action.

~~Sec. 8. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 65, Sec. 2 is amended to read:~~

~~Sec. 3. TASK FORCE TO EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OF
CONVENTION CENTER AND PERFORMANCE VENUE~~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

~~(7) the Chair of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies or designee; and~~

~~(8) the President of the University of Vermont or designee.~~

~~* * *~~

~~(f) Meetings.~~

~~* * *~~

~~(5) The Task Force shall meet not more than ~~six~~ 14 times.~~

~~(g) Reimbursement.~~

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

~~(2) Other members of the Task Force shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than ~~six~~ 14 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.~~

~~Sec 8. [Deleted.]~~

~~Sec. 9. 2016 Acts and Resolves No. 157, Sec. H.12, as amended by 2022~~

Acts and Resolves No. 164, Sec. 5, 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 72, Sec. 39, and 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 176, Sec. 1, is further amended to read:

*Sec. H.12. ~~VEGI; REPEAL OF AUTHORITY TO AWARD
INCENTIVES~~*

~~Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the Vermont Economic Progress Council shall not accept or approve an application for a Vermont Employment Growth Incentive under 32 V.S.A. chapter 105, subchapter 2 on or after January 1, 2027. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 10. CULINARY INSTITUTE; STUDY; REPORT

(a) Purpose. The State of Vermont lost a significant contributor to its culinary workforce pipeline development when the New England Culinary Institute closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The General Assembly finds that the establishment of a new culinary institute is critical for long-term workforce needs in the food, tourism, and hospitality sectors, sectors that are significant for the economic health of the State.

(b) Task. The Office of Workforce Strategy and Development shall engage with the stakeholders set forth in subsection (c) of this section to determine how best to establish a new culinary institute in Vermont by doing the following:

(1) research suitable options for the location of a culinary institute;

(2) determine which college or organization should stand up and administer the culinary institute;

(3) determine to what extent the General Assembly is needed to help fund and establish the culinary institute;

(4) begin establishing relationships with restaurants in Vermont that have or will have workforce needs;

(5) gauge the interest from private investors to determine whether there is interest in private funding for a culinary institute; and

(6) conduct any additional research or outreach that would promote the establishment of a culinary institute.

(c) Stakeholders. The Office shall consult and convene with stakeholders to assist in its work pursuant to subsection (b) of this section that have relevant experience in the food and hospitality sectors, including representation from the State Workforce Development Board, Department of Labor, Department of Corrections, State Refugee Office, Vermont Association of Career and Technical Directors, Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Vermont Independent

Restaurants, University of Vermont, Vermont State Colleges System, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, and Vermont Employee Ownership Center.

(d) Report. On or before December 1, 2026, the Office shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs with its findings and information gathered pursuant to subsection (b) of this section along with any recommendations concerning the establishment of a culinary institute in Vermont. The report shall also list the stakeholders consulted pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

Sec. 11. CONNECTING VERMONT TO NEW YORK; STUDY; REPORT

(a) Task. The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies, in consultation with the stakeholders set forth in subsection (c) of this section, shall consider the following in a study of the short- and long-term solutions to better connect the persons and economies of Vermont and New York:

(1) in regard to Vermont Route 22A:

(A) the current and projected usage and condition of the road;

(B) the rate and severity of accidents on the road; and

(C) options available to improve the integrity of the road and the flow of traffic and safety on the road;

(2) a potential route for a new limited access highway to connect Burlington to Interstate 87 in New York and estimated costs associated with constructing such a route; and

(3) the feasibility of a rail system better connecting the two states upon review of the latest versions of the Vermont Rail Plan and the Vermont Freight Plan.

(b) Stakeholders. The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall consult and convene with stakeholders to assist in its work pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, including representation from the Agency of Transportation, Agency of Natural Resources, Land Use Review Board, Vermont Chamber of Commerce, and Regional Development Corporations.

(c) Report. On or before January 15, 2027, the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies shall submit a written report to the General Assembly with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

~~Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATES~~

~~This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, except that this section (effective dates) and Sec. 8 (convention center task force) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.~~

Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.