

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

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

7 Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 2479 is added to read:

8 § 2479. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

9 (a) Creation and purpose.

10 (1) The Vermont Sister State Program is created within the Agency of  
11 Commerce and Community Development. The Agency shall provide support  
12 to the Program and to the Sister State Program Committee as required.

13 (2) The purpose of the Program is to strengthen Vermont’s international  
14 engagement and to foster mutually beneficial relationships with national and  
15 subnational governments abroad, with a goal of promoting cultural exchange,  
16 economic development, and educational cooperation.

17 (b) Program oversight.

18 (1) The Sister State Program Committee, composed of the following  
19 members, shall oversee the Program:

20 (A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or  
21 designee;

1           (B) a member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the  
2 Speaker of the House;

3           (C) a member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on  
4 Committees;

5           (D) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Council on  
6 World Affairs or designee;

7           (E) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee;

8           (F) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council  
9 or designee; and

10          (G) three members, as follows:

11           (i) one member with expertise in cultural exchange or in Peace  
12 Corps operations, appointed by the Governor;

13           (ii) one member representing a private institution of higher  
14 education, appointed by the Committee on Committees; and

15           (iii) one member representing a public institution of higher  
16 education, appointed by the Speaker.

17          (2) Members of the Committee shall serve two-year terms, provided that  
18 members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(G) of this subsection shall  
19 serve initial terms of three years each to establish staggered terms. Members  
20 may be reappointed.

1           (3) The Committee shall elect a chair and vice chair from among its  
2           members that shall each serve a two-year term.

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

4           (c) Meetings.

5           (1) All meetings shall be called by the Chair, but in the event that the  
6           Committee does not have a chair, a meeting may be called by the Secretary of  
7           Commerce and Community Development or designee.

8           (2) The Committee shall meet:

9           (A) at least once quarterly, for the purpose of:

10           (i) evaluating current Program agreements;

11           (ii) proposing new Program agreements;

12           (iii) preparing its annual report; or

13           (iv) discussing any other matter that the Committee deems

14           relevant to its work; and

15           (B) to review and score an eligible Program application not later than

16           30 days after the Committee receives the application from the Agency,

17           pursuant to subdivision (d)(3) of this section.

18           (d) Program application, review, and approval procedures.

19           (1) Development of application process. The Agency, in consultation

20           with the Committee, shall develop a process by which an entity can apply and

1 be considered for admission as a partner to the Program. This process shall  
2 include the development of:

3 (A) an official application to be in the Program;

4 (B) a confidential internal review procedure to be used by the  
5 Agency to review Program applicants for sensitive political, legal, ethical, and  
6 strategic factors;

7 (C) minimum eligibility requirements to be considered for the  
8 Program;

9 (D) a fixed-scoring system, including a rubric, to be uniformly  
10 applied by the Committee to evaluate all eligible applications;

11 (E) a memorandum of understanding template to be used and signed  
12 by the State and an approved Program partner that shall include a termination  
13 date; and

14 (F) any other necessary Program parameters, including the length of  
15 time for partner agreements to be in effect.

16 (2) Agency initial verification.

17 (A) When a Program application has been received by the Agency  
18 pursuant to this section, the Agency shall, before the Committee may meet to  
19 review the application:

20 (i) verify that the application meets the Program's minimum  
21 eligibility requirements; and

1                   (ii) conduct a confidential internal review of the applicant.

2                   (B) Not later than 10 days after completion of the Agency’s initial  
3 verification and review of an application pursuant to subdivision (A) of this  
4 subdivision (2), the Agency shall send the Committee a copy of the application  
5 along with a summary of the Agency’s analysis.

6                   (C) The confidential internal review process conducted in subdivision  
7 (A)(ii) of this subdivision (2), along with any and all documents reviewed  
8 during that process, shall be exempt from public inspection and copying.

9                   (3) Committee review and recommendation.

10                  (A) The Committee, upon receiving an application that has received  
11 preliminary approval from the Agency, shall meet to review the application  
12 pursuant to subdivision (c)(2)(B) of this section not later than 30 days after  
13 receipt of the application from the Agency.

14                  (B) If the Committee recommends that an application reviewed  
15 pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3) be approved, the Committee  
16 shall submit its recommendation to the Governor along with a copy of the  
17 application not later than 30 days after completing its review of the application.  
18 The Committee shall not send to the Governor an application that the  
19 Committee does not recommend be approved.

20                  (4) Governor’s review.

1           (A) The Governor shall have the sole authority to issue final approval  
2           or disapproval of a Sister State Program application that the Committee  
3           recommended be approved. The Governor shall send written notice of the  
4           Governor’s decision to the Agency not later than 10 days after the Governor’s  
5           decision.

6           (B) If the Governor disapproves a Program application, the  
7           Governor’s notice in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4) shall include a  
8           written explanation of why the Governor did not follow the recommendation of  
9           the Committee.

10           (C) Upon the Agency’s receipt of the Governor’s decision pursuant  
11           to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4), the Agency shall notify the applicant  
12           of the Governor’s decision not later than 30 days after the Agency receives  
13           notice of the Governor’s decision.

14           (D) If the application is approved by the Governor, the Agency shall  
15           finalize a memorandum of understanding between the State and the Sister State  
16           Program applicant.

17           (5) Termination.

18           (A) The Committee may, at one of its meetings, propose to the  
19           Governor upon a majority vote that an active Sister State Program partnership  
20           be terminated.

1           (B) The Governor shall have the sole authority to terminate an active  
2           Sister State Program partnership.

3           (e) Reporting. The Committee shall submit an annual report not later than  
4           January 15 of each year to the Governor and to the House Committee on  
5           Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on  
6           Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs that includes the  
7           following:

8                   (1) an executive summary of key development and outcomes of the  
9           Program;

10                   (2) a description of Committee activities, including a summary of  
11           attendance and decisions at its meetings;

12                   (3) updates on the Program, including an evaluation of sister state  
13           applications, new partners, significant developments, metrics of success, and  
14           challenges;

15                   (4) a description of stakeholder engagement with the Program;

16                   (5) a financial overview, including a summary of funding sources and  
17           expenditures; and

18                   (6) an outlook for the Program, which shall include strategic objectives,  
19           potential new agreements, and growth opportunities for the next year.

20           (f) Compensation and reimbursement.



- 1 (4) the State Treasurer or designee;
- 2 (5) the Commissioner of Economic Development or designee; and
- 3 (6) the President of the University of Vermont or designee.

4 \* \* \*

5 (c) The members of the Commission, ~~except for the State Treasurer or~~  
6 ~~designee,~~ appointed pursuant to subdivisions (a)(1)–(3) of this section:

7 (1) shall be appointed for terms of four years each and shall continue to  
8 serve until their successors are appointed, except that in order to achieve  
9 staggered terms, the two members appointed by the Governor shall serve initial  
10 terms of two years each and the two members appointed by the Speaker of the  
11 House shall serve initial terms of three years each;

12 (2) ~~Members~~ may be reappointed: upon the expiration of the member's  
13 term;

14 (3) ~~A member serves~~ serve at the pleasure of the member's appointing  
15 authority; and

16 (4) ~~Not shall consist of not more than two members serving on the~~  
17 ~~Commission may be members~~ of the General Assembly.

18 \* \* \*

19 (f) The Commission, in coordination with the State Treasurer's office, shall  
20 submit a written report with its findings, results, and recommendations to the  
21 Governor and the General Assembly within one year ~~of~~ following its initial

1 organizational meeting and on or before December 1 of each succeeding year  
2 for the activities of the current calendar year. The report shall also include a:

3 (1) 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; and

6 (2) detailed accounting from the State Treasurer’s office of the:

7 (A) administrative expenses that have been paid with funds raised by  
8 the Commission, pursuant to subsection (g) of this section; and

9 (B) funds raised and donations, grants, and bequests received through  
10 the Commission including the name, country of residence, and amount donated  
11 of each contributor.

12 (g)(1) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is authorized to raise funds,  
13 through direct solicitation or other fundraising events, alone or with other  
14 groups, and accept donations, grants, and bequests from individuals,  
15 corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private  
16 organizations and institutions, to defray the Commission’s administrative  
17 expenses ~~and to carry out its purposes as set forth in this chapter.~~

18 (2) The funds, donations, grants, or bequests received pursuant to ~~this~~  
19 ~~chapter~~ subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be deposited in a bank account  
20 and allocated ~~annually~~ by the State Treasurer’s office to defray the  
21 Commission’s administrative expenses ~~and carry out its purposes.~~ Any monies

1 so withdrawn shall not be used for any purpose other than the payment of  
2 administrative expenses under incurred pursuant to this chapter section and  
3 shall be itemized and tracked for reporting purposes by the State Treasurer’s  
4 office. Interest earned shall remain in the bank account. The State Treasurer  
5 shall include the balance of the account in the annual reporting required  
6 pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

7 (3) For purposes of this section, “administrative expenses” does not  
8 include any:

9 (A) expenses related to:

10 (i) campaign or election activity; or

11 (ii) food or beverages provided at official Commission meetings;

12 or

13 (B) other expense that is not specific to the administrative functions  
14 of the Commission.

15 (h) Members of the Commission shall not receive any compensation or be  
16 entitled to reimbursement of expenses by the State of Vermont or from the  
17 fund managed by the State Treasurer pursuant to subsection (g) of this section  
18 for their service on the Commission.

