

Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs - Week of 1/6 Agenda Items & Priorities

Wednesday 1/7 - Housing and Economic Development

Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Housing

- Housing emphasized as the **number one issue** for Vermont business when considering development, expansion, or relocation.
- Business have reported to ACCD that:
 - Jobs are available
 - Workforce expansion is constrained primarily by lack of housing
- Committee was very optimistic on potential outcomes of CHIP

State Marketing

- ACCD has been focused on marketing Vermont as a year round tourism destination
 - Highlighted recent issues with Canadian tourism
 - Adopting marketing strategy that is regionally tailored
- More updates on Marketing expected next week

Federal Funding Uncertainty

- The committee expressed interest in understanding the programs that may be impacted by a loss of federal funds.

Data Dashboards

- The committee expressed desire for cross departmental data for the purpose of tracking progress of ACCD related initiatives. (discussed further later)
- ACCD is currently working on building data dashboards for this purpose

Lyle Jepson, Commissioner, Agency of Economic Development

Highlighting Successful Programs

- Expressed that AED has seen state marketing programs as being successful in attracting new people to the state.
 - **TIF** (tax increment financing)

- Successful in Killington & Rutland (76% & 85% voter support respectively for economic bonds)
- **Small business grants** (~\$25k) have been very reported very impactful
- **Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC)**
 - Significant infrastructure impact. Cited Rutland airport industrial park.
 - Expressed concern for potential federal cuts
- **Brownfields** revitalization
 - Invested \$48 million to date.
 - The commissioner urged for continued funding; to which the committee responded positively
- **State Trade Expansion Program (STEP)**
 - which invested \$700k to help business exports
 - Reported a **14:1 ROI**.
- Discussed the significance of the **captive insurance** industry in Vermont.
- Also used **BETA Technologies** as an example to highlight the need for housing and transportation to support workforce development.

Alex Farrell, Commissioner, Department of Housing and Community Development

Highlighting Successful Initiatives

- VHIP (Vermont Housing Improvement program)
 - “Massive success” in reducing costs through renovations
 - The committee suggested continued support for the program
- MHIR (manufactured home improvement repair). Renovating mobile homes.
- **Homes for All Initiative**: Strong potential implications for workforce development.
Homes for All Initiative 3 parts:
 - **Toolkit**: A guide for small scale developers
 - **Developer training**: workforce training classes starting in February to teach people how to become small-scale developers
 - **802 Homes Catalog**: catalog of 10 pre-approved housing designs to expedite the permitting process

Discussion and Review of CHIP Guidelines. Jessica Hartleben, Executive Director, Vermont Economic Progress Council

HCED will hear about CHIP at 1:00pm today

- General guidelines that have been set for the CHIP program

- Program is ready to go without further legislative action and the committee expressed excitement to see results

Thursdays 1/ 8 - Labor, Housing, & Data

Sabrina Haskell, Executive Director, Office of Workforce Strategy and Development; Drake Turner, Deputy Director, Office of Workforce Strategy and Development; Kendall Smith, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Labor; Jay Ramsey, Director of Workforce development, Department of Labor

Office of Workforce Strategy & Development and State Workforce Development Board

- Background on Office and Board
- Questions from the Committee regarding broader representation on the Workforce Development Board, specifically lack of representation from labor organizations.
- Board Goals: Expected to see metrics on goals
 - Increase supply of working in key sectors
 - Support adults to re-engage and advance in VT workforce
 - Support business expansion & relocation in VT
 - Increase postsecondary graduate retention
- The committee expressed desire for increased performance metrics and data collection regarding workforce development progress
- Some questions from the committee regarding clarity on strategies for implementation

Vermont DOL

- 2026 priorities
 - Housing
 - Education transformation
 - CTE, Adult Ed, Afterschool & Summer
 - Increasing opportunities for workforce development and expansion:
 - Service-to-career pathways
 - Career development workshops
 - Adult CTE grants
 - Asking for more money
 - Apprenticeship expansion
 - Sector specific (construction, healthcare, public)
 - Navigating uncertainty regarding federally funding
 - SNAP/Medicaid work requirements
- Committee planning follow up soon

Data Trust Report

- Question for data trust report: what would it take to create a central repository (data trust) for all state data? Requirements?
 - Stand alone data center built by the state is not feasible at the moment
 - Recommended Joining Multi-State Data Collaboratives for minimal cost
 - PSOE (post-secondary employment outcomes) coalition. No financial cost. Vermont higher ed institution would have to commit data.
 - Coleridge initiative. Cross state data linking system
 - BLS wage records program. Allows states to securely aggregate wage data
 - Committee was supportive of this idea. No legislative action requested at the moment.