

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs to  
3 which was referred Senate Bill No. 327 entitled “An act relating to economic  
4 development” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and  
5 recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting  
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. PURPOSE

8 This act proposes to strengthen and support Vermont’s businesses and  
9 promote long-term economic growth by investing in the economic  
10 development and vitality of its downtowns and village centers, providing key  
11 financial support, technical assistance, and incentives for Vermont businesses  
12 of all sizes and at all stages of development. This act also requires the  
13 Commissioner of Economic Development to research and create an inventory  
14 of the resources available to businesses to assist with growth and development,  
15 the Office of Workforce Strategy and Development to study the feasibility of  
16 establishing a new culinary institute in the State, and the Department of  
17 Transportation to study the feasibility of constructing a new limited access  
18 highway that would connect the population centers of central-west and  
19 northwest Vermont.

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

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

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§ 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 ~~\$3,000,000.00~~ \$5,000,000.00;

(2) a total annual allocation of ~~no~~ not more than 30 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.

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Sec. 3. EXPANDING SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

(a) Expanding legal services. Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in fiscal year 2027, \$300,000.00 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, \$689,000.00 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 \$300,000.00 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,

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

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

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

14 Sec. 4. VERMONT OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC

15 COLLABORATIVE

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

1       Sec. 5. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OFFICE; APPROPRIATION

2           Of monies appropriated to the Department of Economic Development in  
3       fiscal year 2027, \$225,000.00 shall be allocated to the International Business  
4       Office for the purpose of:

5           (1) continuing to support the Office’s initiatives; and

6           (2) expanding to support the economic relationship between Vermont  
7       and Taiwan.

8       Sec. 6. BROWNFIELDS ALLOCATION

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

12       Sec. 7. BUSINESS RESOURCES AND GROWTH; INVENTORY; STUDY;  
13       REPORT

14           (a) Business growth and development study. The Commissioner of  
15       Economic Development, in consultation with stakeholders, for the purpose of  
16       determining how the State can better enable and support the growth of  
17       Vermont businesses, shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18           (b) Report. On or before December 15, 2026, the Commissioner shall  
19           submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic  
20           Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing  
21           and General Affairs with the Commissioner’s findings pursuant to the business

1 resources and growth study set forth in this section along with any  
2 recommendations for legislative action.

3 Sec. 8. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 65, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20              (7) the Chair of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development  
21 Agencies or designee; **and**





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

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

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

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

9           (c) Stakeholders. The Office shall consult and convene with stakeholders  
10          to assist in its work pursuant to subsection (b) of this section that have relevant  
11          experience in the food and hospitality sectors, including representation from  
12          the State Workforce Development Board, Department of Labor, Department of  
13          Corrections, Vermont Association of Career and Technical Directors, Vermont  
14          Chamber of Commerce, Vermont Independent Restaurants, University of  
15          Vermont, Vermont State Colleges System, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund,  
16          and Vermont Employee Ownership Center.

17          (d) Report. On or before December 1, 2026, the Office shall submit a  
18          written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic  
19          Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing  
20          and General Affairs with its findings and information gathered pursuant to  
21          subsection (b) of this section along with any recommendations concerning the

1 establishment of a culinary institute in Vermont. The report shall also list the  
2 stakeholders consulted pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

3 **Sec. 11. INTERSTATE 22A; STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT**

4 (a) Creation. There is created the Interstate 22A Limited Access Highway  
5 Study Committee to examine the potential for constructing a new limited  
6 access highway to connect the population centers of central-west and  
7 northwest Vermont to Interstate 87 and replace Vermont Route 22A as the  
8 primary route from Burlington to Interstate 87.

9 (b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following  
10 members:

11 (1) the Secretary of Transportation or designee;

12 (2) two current members of the House, not from the same political party,  
13 appointed by the Speaker of the House;

14 (3) two current members of the Senate, not from the same political  
15 party, appointed by the Committee on Committees;

16 (4) the Mayor of Burlington or designee;

17 (5) the Chair of the South Burlington City Council or designee;

18 (6) the Mayor of Vergennes or designee;

19 (7) the Chair of the Middlebury Selectboard or designee;

20 (8) the Mayor of Rutland or designee;

1           (9) a member appointed by the Chittenden County Regional Planning

2           Commission;

3           (10) a member appointed by the Addison County Regional Planning

4           Commission; and

5           (11) a member appointed by the Rutland Regional Planning

6           Commission.

7           (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall examine the potential to  
8           construct a limited access highway to connect the population centers of central-  
9           west and northwest Vermont to Interstate 87 and replace Vermont Route 22A  
10           as the primary route from Burlington to Interstate 87, including the following  
11           issues:

12           (1) the current and projected usage of Vermont Route 22A;

13           (2) the potential route for a new limited access highway to connect  
14           Burlington to Interstate 87;

15           (3) the projected cost to construct a new highway connection between  
16           Burlington and Interstate 87;

17           (4) potential funding mechanisms for a new highway, including the  
18           utilization of tolls through integration into the E-ZPass Group or through the  
19           utilization of a public-private partnership;

1           (5) the projected economic impact of a new highway connection  
2           between Burlington and Interstate 87 on Vermont and on the population  
3           centers of central-west and northwest Vermont; and

4           (6) other projected impacts on Vermont and communities located along  
5           U.S. Route 7 in Vermont of a new highway connection between U.S. Route 7  
6           and Interstate 87.

7           (d) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical,  
8           and legal assistance of the Agency of Transportation.

9           (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2027, the Committee shall submit a  
10           written report to the General Assembly with its findings and any  
11           recommendations for legislative action.

12           (f) Meetings.

13           (1) The Secretary of Transportation shall call the first meeting of the  
14           Committee to occur on or before September 1, 2026.

15           (2) The Secretary of Transportation or designee shall be the Chair.

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

17           (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on February 15, 2027.

18           (g) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Committee who  
19           are not otherwise compensated for their attendance at meetings shall be entitled  
20           to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under

1 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six meetings. These payments shall be  
2 made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Transportation.

3 Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATES

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

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8 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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Senator \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE