



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

May 13, 2026

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H.931 – An act relating to miscellaneous changes in education law

As recommended by the Senate Committee on Education, Draft 4.1^{1,2}

Bill Summary

This bill would introduce several additions and amendments to education law, including Vermont's adoption of the Interstate Compact for Education, a requirement that the Agency of Education (AOE) pay for criminal information requests for some new employees or contractors, amendments to the Advisory Council on Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention, and a revision to the school construction statute. This bill would be effective July 1, 2026.

Fiscal Impact

The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) estimates this bill would increase State expenditures by roughly \$22,600 in fiscal year 2027. This bill would appropriate \$21,000 from the General Fund to AOE in fiscal year 2027 (the remaining \$1,600 would be absorbed by the AOE budget).

This bill would codify Vermont's membership in the Interstate Compact for Education. Member states pay annual dues to the Compact. Vermont currently pays these dues (about \$53,000) through AOE's budget, so this would not represent a new expenditure.

This bill would also require AOE to pay criminal records check fees. AOE would pay the cost of obtaining certain AOE employment applicants' fingerprints and criminal records from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). JFO expects fees would total about \$47 per applicant in fiscal year 2027. AOE estimates up to 34 applicants would require criminal record checks each year, for a total estimated annual cost of \$1,600. This bill would not appropriate additional funds for this purpose; the cost would be de minimis and borne by the AOE budget.

Additionally, this bill would restructure and expand the membership of the Advisory Council on Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention. Approximately 13 of the Council's 17 members would be eligible for per diems and expense reimbursement, which JFO estimates would cost \$21,000 in fiscal year 2027. This bill would appropriate \$21,000 from the General Fund to AOE in fiscal year 2027 for this purpose.

¹ The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) is a nonpartisan legislative office dedicated to producing unbiased fiscal analysis – this fiscal note is meant to provide information for legislative consideration, not to provide policy recommendations.

² The full fiscal note history is available on the fiscal tab of the bill page on the General Assembly website and can be pulled up through a bill number search on the JFO page.

Background and Details

Section 1: Amending the Moratorium on Approved Independent Schools

This section would amend Act 78 (2023), as amended by Act 72 (2025), to allow therapeutic approved independent schools that changed ownership to be approved by the State Board of Education (SBE). Under Act 78, Sec. E.511.1, the SBE is prohibited from approving applications for initial approval of an approved independent school. This bill's amendment would apply to therapeutic schools that are required to submit an application due to a change in ownership that will remain a therapeutic school afterwards. The fiscal impact of this change is unclear.

Section 2: Interstate Compact for Education

This section would codify Vermont's membership in the Interstate Compact for Education. Vermont would be represented by seven individuals:

- the Governor;
- two legislators (one from the House and one from the Senate); and
- four members appointed by the Governor, one of which must be the head of a State agency or institution that is responsible for at least one public education program.

As a member of the Compact, Vermont is subject to paying dues; estimated to be about \$53,000 in fiscal year 2027. As in prior years, these are factored into AOE's base budget and would not represent a new cost.

Section 3: Background Checks

Section 3 would mandate prospective employees and contractors of AOE who could have unsupervised contact with students to provide their fingerprints to facilitate a criminal records check. Fingerprints would be taken by a law enforcement agency and records would be retrieved from the FBI by the Vermont Crime Information Center (VCIC). Per 20 V.S.A. § 2062, up to \$35 may be charged for fingerprinting.

In fiscal year 2026, the retrieval fee is \$12 per applicant. VCIC collects and remits these fees (less a small share) to the FBI. It's estimated that an average of 34 individuals would need record checks annually, for an approximate total cost of \$1,600 which would be absorbed by the AOE budget.

Sections 6-7: Advisory Council on Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention

Section 6 would amend 16 V.S.A. § 570 to restructure and expand the membership of the Advisory Council on Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention. The Council would begin meeting on November 15, 2026 and be required to meet at least four times a year. Annually, on January 15, the Council would submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education.

JFO expects that 13 members would be eligible for per diems and expense reimbursement, for a total annual cost of approximately \$21,000. Section 7 would appropriate \$21,000 from the General Fund to AOE in fiscal year 2027 for this purpose.

Section 8: Definition of Cost Saving Measure

Section 8 would amend the definition of "cost-saving measure", under "energy performance contracting" in school construction aid, to include "facility additions".³ Cost-saving measures installed using a performance contract are eligible to apply for aid through the State Aid for School Construction Program. Expanding the definition of "cost-saving measure" would potentially increase the number of eligible projects.

The fiscal impact of this section is unknown. JFO does not have an estimate of how many projects would meet this new definition and the State Aid for School Construction Program does not currently have a funding source. Absent one, it is unclear how or if newly eligible projects would receive construction aid.

³ 16 V.S.A. § 3448f