

1 H.416

2 Introduced by Representatives Brady of Williston, Graning of Jericho,
3 McCann of Montpelier, Mulvaney-Stanak of Burlington, Taylor
4 of Milton, and Williams of Barre City

5 Referred to Committee on

6 Date:

7 Subject: Education; teachers; workforce development

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to address
9 teacher workforce development through several initiatives, including (1)
10 creating the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program, a
11 forgivable loan incentive program that provides forgivable loans to students
12 enrolled in a teaching program in an eligible school who commit to working as
13 a teacher in Vermont; (2) creating the Peer Review Support Grant Program to
14 provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional development for
15 prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of Education's
16 peer review process; (3) suspending teacher licensure fees from fiscal year
17 2024 through fiscal year 2029; and (4) requiring the Agency of Education to
18 assess the costs and benefits of participation in licensure reciprocity
19 agreements and licensure compacts for teachers.

20 An act relating to teacher workforce development

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

2 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 6 is added to read:

3 Subchapter 6. Forgivable Loan Incentive Programs

4 § 2871. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

5 PROGRAM

6 (a) As used in this section:

7 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
8 established in section 2821 of this title.

9 (2) “Eligible individual” means an individual who satisfies the eligibility
10 requirements under this section for a forgivable loan.

11 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
12 institution as defined under section 2822 of this title.

13 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
14 tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of required books
15 and supplies for up to full-time attendance at an eligible school.

16 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive
17 Program created under this section.

18 (b) The Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created
19 and shall be administered by the Corporation. The Program provides
20 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to

1 working as a teacher in a Vermont public school and who meet the eligibility
2 requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

3 (c) The Corporation shall disburse forgivable loan funds under the Program
4 on behalf of eligible individuals, subject to the appropriation of funds by the
5 General Assembly for this purpose.

6 (d) To be eligible for a forgivable loan under the Program, an individual,
7 whether a resident or nonresident of Vermont, shall satisfy all of the following
8 requirements:

9 (1) be enrolled in teaching program at an eligible school;

10 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
11 is enrolled;

12 (3) agree to work as a teacher in Vermont employed directly by a public
13 school located in Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for
14 each year of forgivable loan awarded;

15 (4) have executed a credit agreement or promissory note that will reduce
16 the individual's forgivable loan benefit, in whole or in part, pursuant to
17 subsection (f) of this section, if the individual fails to complete the period of
18 service required in this subsection;

19 (5) have completed the Program's application form, the Free
20 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and for Vermont residents, the

1 Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance
2 with a schedule determined by the Corporation; and

3 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
4 require.

5 (e) Students attending an eligible school in Vermont shall receive first
6 priority for forgivable loans.

7 (f) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a teacher in a Vermont public
8 school for a period that would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan
9 benefit received by the individual, other than for good cause as determined by
10 the Corporation, then the individual shall receive only partial loan forgiveness
11 for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant to the terms of the interest-free credit
12 agreement or promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering
13 the Program.

14 (g) There shall be no deadline to apply for a forgivable loan under this
15 section. Forgivable loans shall be awarded on a rolling basis as long as funds
16 are available, and any funds remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall roll over
17 and shall be available to the Corporation in the following fiscal year to award
18 additional forgivable loans as set forth in this section.

19 (h) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
20 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
21 forgivable loan amounts. The Corporation shall not use more than seven

1 percent of the funds appropriated for the Program for its costs of
2 administration and may recoup its reasonable costs of collecting the forgivable
3 loans in repayment.

4 Sec. 2. PEER REVIEW SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAM; REPORT

5 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to encourage and support the
6 development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators. To
7 combat the growing educator shortage throughout the State and meet the needs
8 of Vermont students, it is necessary to invest in nontraditional educator
9 training programs.

10 (b) Grant program.

11 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2024, there is established the Peer
12 Review Support Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of
13 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional
14 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of
15 Education's peer review process, with the goal of increased program
16 completion rates.

17 (2) Program administration. The Agency shall adopt policies,
18 procedures, and guidelines necessary for implementation of the Program
19 described in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

20 (3) Eligibility criteria. The Agency shall issue grants to organizations or
21 school districts with programs designed to provide prospective educators in the

1 peer review program the support necessary for successful completion of the
2 peer review process by providing:

3 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

4 (B) local, educator-led seminars designed around the Vermont
5 licensure portfolio themes;

6 (C) local educator mentors;

7 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
8 process; and

9 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
10 of licensure.

11 (4) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Agency of Education
12 shall report to the Senate and House Committees on Education on the status of
13 the implementation of the Peer Review Support Grant Program and a summary
14 and performance review of the programs to which grants were awarded. The
15 report shall include any metrics used in the performance review, the number of
16 program participants, endorsement areas of participants, feedback from
17 participants and mentors, and any recommendation for legislative action.

18 Sec. 3. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

19 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, teacher licensure
20 fee requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a) are suspended during fiscal years
21 2024–2029.

1 (b) In fiscal year 2024, the estimated fees that would have been collected
2 under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a) shall be accounted for through an appropriation to
3 the Agency of Education from the General Fund.

4 Sec. 4. TEACHER LICENSING PORTABILITY

5 In order to address demand for qualified teachers and a declining educator
6 workforce, on or before January 1, 2024, the Agency of Education shall issue a
7 written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House
8 Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, and the Senate
9 Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs assessing
10 the costs and benefits of participation in licensure reciprocity agreements and
11 licensure compacts for teachers. In writing the report, the Agency shall consult
12 the Standards Board for Professional Educators and other interested
13 stakeholders.

14 Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION

15 Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), the sum of \$712,500.00 is
16 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal
17 year 2024 for the purpose of funding the Peer Review Support Grant Program
18 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

19 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.