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H.484

Introduced by House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

Date:

Subject: Commerce and trade; workforce development; economic
development

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to adopt
miscellaneous proposals to enhance workforce and economic development
opportunities.

An act relating to enhancing workforce and economic development
opportunities

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

* * * Education Workforce * * *

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

Subchapter 6. Forgivable Loan Incentive Programs

§ 2871. VERMONT TEACHER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE

PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section:

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

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

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

5 (4) “Forgivable loan” means a loan awarded under this section covering
6 tuition, which may also include room, board, and the cost of required books
7 and supplies for up to full-time attendance in an undergraduate or graduate
8 program at an eligible school.

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

11 (b) The Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program is created
12 and shall be administered by the Corporation. The Program provides
13 forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to
14 working as a teacher in a Vermont public school and who meet the eligibility
15 requirements in subsection (d) of this section. The intent of the Program is to
16 encourage students to enter into teaching professions, with an emphasis on
17 encouraging Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters, New
18 Americans, and other historically underrepresented communities in an effort to
19 diversify the educator workforce.

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

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

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

8 (2) maintain good standing at the eligible school at which the individual
9 is enrolled;

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

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

17 (5) have completed the Program's application form, the Free
18 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and for Vermont residents, the
19 Vermont grant application each academic year of enrollment in accordance
20 with a schedule determined by the Corporation; and

1 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
2 require.

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

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

15 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
16 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
17 forgivable loan amounts. The Corporation shall not use more than seven
18 percent of the funds appropriated for the Program for its costs of
19 administration and may recoup its reasonable costs of collecting the forgivable
20 loans in repayment.

1 Sec. 2. EMERGING PATHWAYS TO TEACHING; REPORT

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

7 (b) Grant program.

8 (1) Program creation. In fiscal year 2024, there is established the
9 Emerging Pathways Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of
10 Education, to provide grants to expand support, mentoring, and professional
11 development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of
12 Education's emerging pathways, including peer review and apprentice
13 pathways, with the goal of increased program completion rates and increased
14 rates of licensure of underrepresented demographics.

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

18 (3) Eligibility criteria. The Agency shall issue grants to organizations,
19 school districts, or a group of school districts for the development and
20 administration of programs and program coordinators designed to provide
21 prospective educators in emerging pathways to teaching with the support

1 necessary for successful entry into the educator workforce. Recruitment,
2 support, and retention of prospective educator candidates shall focus on
3 diversity, equity, and inclusion. Support provided through the Program may
4 include:

5 (A) support through the Praxis exam process;

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

8 (C) local educator mentors;

9 (D) support in completing the peer review portfolio and licensing
10 process; and

11 (E) continued professional development support within the first year
12 of licensure.

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

1 Sec. 3. TEACHER LICENSING FEES; SUSPENSION

2 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, peer review
3 process one-time licensure fee requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a)(7) are
4 suspended during fiscal years 2024–2029.

5 (b) In fiscal year 2024, the estimated fees that would have been collected
6 under 16 V.S.A. § 1697(a)(7) shall be accounted for through funds
7 appropriated to the Agency of Education from the General Fund.

8 Sec. 4. EDUCATION WORKFORCE; APPROPRIATIONS

9 (a) Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(d), in fiscal year 2024 the amount of
10 \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of
11 Education for the purpose of funding the Emerging Pathways Grant Program
12 established by Sec. 2 of this act.

13 (b) In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from
14 the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the
15 Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created in 16 V.S.A.
16 § 2871.

17 Sec. 5. EDUCATOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

18 (a) Educator demographics. In order to understand and improve the
19 longstanding and well-documented issue of underrepresentation in the
20 Vermont educator workforce, including underrepresentation of Black,
21 Indigenous, and Persons of Color; New Americans; and other historically

1 underrepresented communities, the Agency of Education shall collect
2 demographic information from educators and report such information in its
3 annual teacher and staff full-time equivalencies report. The Agency shall
4 submit the educator demographic information section of the report annually to
5 the General Assembly on or before each January 15.

6 (b) Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant
7 Program.

8 (1) There is created the Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity
9 Groups Grant Program for the purpose of providing grants for the support of
10 existing and the development of new educator affinity groups for historically
11 underrepresented groups. The Agency of Education shall administer the
12 Program.

13 (2) The Agency shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
14 necessary for the implementation of the Program established pursuant to this
15 subsection (b).

16 (3) The sum of \$30,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the
17 Agency of Education in fiscal year 2024 for the purpose of funding the
18 Historically Underrepresented Educator Affinity Groups Grant Program
19 created in this subsection (b).

1 * * * Corrections; Workforce * * *

2 Sec. 6. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONAL

3 DEVELOPMENT; INTENT; CONTRACT

4 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to assist the Department of
5 Corrections to continue and further engage in a professional development
6 initiative to enhance supervisory effectiveness and strengthen leadership
7 development within the Department and among its employees. The
8 Department's enhanced supervisory training is part of its effort to address an
9 employee workforce crisis and strengthen workplace satisfaction.

10 (b) The Department of Corrections shall contract or expand an existing
11 contract with a vendor to provide supervisory and management professional
12 development services to the Department and among its employees.

13 (c) On or before March 15, 2024, the Department and the contracted
14 vendor shall testify before the House Committee on Corrections and
15 Institutions about the progress and effectiveness of its professional
16 development initiative. The Department shall make management, supervisory,
17 and frontline staff available to testify.

18 (d) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the
19 General Fund to the Department of Corrections for the purpose of contracting
20 or expanding an existing contract with a vendor to provide supervisory and
21 management professional development services to the Department's

1 employees in accordance with the Department’s efforts to address an employee
2 workforce crisis and strengthen workplace satisfaction.

3 Sec. 7. 28 V.S.A. § 126 is added to read:

4 § 126. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM;

5 CONFIDENTIALITY

6 (a) As used in this section:

7 (1) “Department” has the same meaning as in subdivision 3(4) of this
8 title.

9 (2) “Participant” means a Department staff member who has been
10 involved in a traumatic incident by reason of employment at the Department
11 and who has agreed to participate in the Department’s peer support program.

12 (3) “Peer support” means appropriate support and services offered by a
13 peer support specialist to a participant.

14 (4) “Peer support program” means a program established by the
15 Department of Corrections to provide appropriate peer support services to
16 Department staff members.

17 (5) “Peer support session” means a peer support program session for a
18 Department staff member who has been involved in a traumatic incident by
19 reason of employment at the Department or related to other personal matters.

20 (6) “Peer support specialist” means a Department staff member who, by
21 reason of the staff member’s prior experience, training, or interest, has

1 expressed a desire and has been selected to provide appropriate peer support
2 services to a participant.

3 (7) “Staff member” means a supervising officer as defined in
4 subdivision 3(9) of this title, a correctional officer as defined in subdivision
5 3(10) of this title, and any other employee of the Department.

6 (b)(1) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, any
7 communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer
8 support session of the peer support program, including any oral or written
9 information conveyed during a peer support session, shall not be disclosed by
10 any individual participating in the peer support session.

11 (2) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any
12 communication relating to a peer support session between peer support
13 specialists, between peer support specialists and participants of the peer
14 support program, between participants of the peer support program, or between
15 any other Department staff member, including any oral or written information,
16 shall not be disclosed by any individual participating in the communication.

17 (3) Written communications described in this subsection, such as notes,
18 records, and reports related to a peer support session, are exempt from public
19 inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept
20 confidential. The Public Records Act exemptions created in this section shall

1 not be subject to the provisions of 1 V.S.A. § 317(e) (repeal of Public Records
2 Act exemptions).

3 (c) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any
4 communication made by a participant or peer support specialist in a peer
5 support session, including any oral or written communication, such as notes,
6 records, and reports related to the peer support session, shall not be admissible
7 in a judicial, administrative, or arbitration proceeding. Limitations on
8 disclosure imposed by this subsection include disclosure during any discovery
9 conducted as part of an adjudicatory proceeding. Limitations on disclosure
10 imposed by this subsection shall not include knowledge acquired by the
11 Department or staff members from observations made during the course of
12 employment or information acquired by the by the Department or staff
13 members during the course of employment that is otherwise subject to
14 discovery or introduction into evidence.

15 (d)(1) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of
16 this section shall only apply to a peer support session conducted by an
17 individual who has:

18 (A) been designated by the Department or the peer support program
19 to act as a peer support specialist; and

20 (B) received and completed training in peer support and providing
21 emotional and moral support to Department staff members who have been

1 involved in emotionally traumatic incidents by reason of their employment or
2 other personal matters.

3 (2) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of
4 this section shall not apply to the following information as it pertains to an
5 individual designated to receive such information in the normal course the
6 individual's professional responsibilities:

7 (A) any threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant of a peer
8 support session or any information conveyed in a peer support session relating
9 to a threat of suicide or homicide;

10 (B) any information relating to the abuse of a child or vulnerable
11 adult, or other information that is required to be reported by law;

12 (C) any admission of criminal conduct; or

13 (D) any admission of a plan to commit a crime.

14 (e) Nothing in this section shall prohibit any communications between peer
15 support specialists regarding a peer support session or between peer support
16 specialists and participants of the peer support program.

17 (f)(1) The Department shall not be liable for any disclosure made in
18 violation of this section by an a peer support specialist or participant who
19 participates in a peer support session.

20 (2) A peer support specialist who in good faith provides appropriate peer
21 support services to a participant of the peer support program shall be immune

1 from criminal or civil liability for any injury to the participant unless the peer
2 support specialist's conduct constitutes gross negligence, recklessness, or
3 intentional misconduct.

4 * * * Young Adult Workforce * * *

5 Sec. 8. VERMONT SERVE, LEARN, AND EARN PROGRAM;

6 APPROPRIATION

7 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,400,000.00 is appropriated from the
8 General Fund to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to continue
9 funding through the pilot project the Vermont Serve, Learn, and Earn Program,
10 which supports workforce development goals through creating meaningful
11 paid service and learning opportunities for young adults, through the Serve,
12 Learn, and Earn Partnership made up of the Vermont Youth Conservation
13 Corps, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Works for Women, and Resource VT.
14 The Department shall enter into a grant agreement with the Partnership that
15 specifies the required services and outcomes for the Program.

16 * * * Adult Learning * * *

17 Sec. 9. ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY; APPROPRIATION

18 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
19 General Fund to the Agency of Education for adult learning services.

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* * * Climate Workforce * * *

Sec. 10. CLIMATE WORKFORCE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN;
ADVANCE VERMONT: APPROPRIATION

(a) Advance Vermont shall create a climate workforce-focused public education campaign that engages current and prospective employees, Vermont youth, adults interested in changing careers, and individuals yet to earn a postsecondary credential, or those who are looking to upskill.

(b) The campaign shall include:

(1) targeted external communications to support awareness of climate pathways in Vermont, including partnership and collaboration with direct service organizations;

(2) engagement through workshops, webinars, and trainings;

(3) information about climate sector career and education pathways through centralized and easy to access resources, such as MyFutureVT.org and other websites and applications; and

(4) video series and other media featuring opportunities with employers and employee success stories.

(d) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a subgrant to Advance Vermont to implement this section.

1 Sec. 11. VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND;

2 BUSINESS COACHING; APPROPRIATION

3 (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$60,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a
5 subgrant to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to expand its Business
6 Coaching program to work with a group of existing energy services businesses
7 interested in adopting a climate-centered mission and working with trades
8 persons looking to start their own climate-centered business.

9 (b) The Fund shall recruit a cohort of up to twelve existing companies and
10 a cohort of up to twelve trained tradespeople to receive advanced business
11 assistance to enable them to either pivot their existing business or start a new
12 business that will expand the State's ability to deploy renewable energy and
13 efficiency technologies to more homes and businesses across the State.

14 * * * Higher Education; Workforce Investments; Curricula Expansion * * *

15 Sec. 12. UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT; OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT;

16 APPROPRIATION

17 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$2,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
18 General Fund to the University of Vermont Office of Engagement, in
19 consultation with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, for additional
20 forgivable loans of \$5,000.00 per graduate for recent college graduates across

1 all Vermont higher education institutions who commit to work in Vermont for
2 two years after graduation.

3 Sec. 13. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; RESTORATIVE
4 JUSTICE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$700,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to establish a bachelor of science
7 program in restorative justice at Vermont State University.

8 Sec. 14. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; VERMONT POLICE
9 ACADEMY; STUDY

10 On or before January 15, 2024, the Vermont Criminal Justice Council and
11 representatives of the Vermont State Colleges and other public and private
12 postsecondary institutions that offer a degree program in criminal justice shall
13 review, consider, and take steps necessary to standardize the curricula offered
14 and avoid redundant requirements for obtaining certification by prospective
15 criminal justice personnel and shall submit a report of its actions to the House
16 Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate
17 Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs.

18 Sec. 15. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CERTIFICATE IN 3-D
19 TECHNOLOGY; APPROPRIATION

20 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated from the
21 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to establish a Certificate in 3-D

1 Technology program offered as a full-time, six-week, intensive residential
2 summer program at Vermont State University, which will:

3 (1) offer knowledge and hands-on experience that appeals to a wide
4 range of interests from science and engineering to the arts and humanities;

5 (2) position students for greater success in college and with an
6 employable edge upon completion;

7 (3) attract diverse types of learners from high schools and CTE centers;

8 (4) foster interest in STE(A)M with learners across different disciplines;

9 (5) leverage the latest 3-D technology available at the Advanced
10 Manufacturing Center; and

11 (6) build local and national awareness of the Vermont State College
12 System's innovative, experiential learning methodology and technical
13 expertise.

14 Sec. 16. VERMONT STATE COLLEGES; CRITICAL

15 OCCUPATIONS SCHOLARSHIPS; APPROPRIATION

16 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,800,000.00 is appropriated from the
17 General Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to provide Critical Occupations
18 Scholarships for eligible students with a household income of \$75,000.00 or
19 less enrolled education programs that lead to a career in an occupation with
20 critical need, including early childhood occupations, clinical mental health
21 counseling, criminal justice occupations, and all levels of nursing.

1 Sec. 17. UPSKILL VERMONT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

2 APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$3,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the University of Vermont to provide additional free classes
5 through the Upskill Vermont Scholarship Program for Vermont residents
6 seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance job skills.

7 * * * Vermont Trades Scholarship Program * * *

8 Sec. 18. VERMONT TRADES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;

9 APPROPRIATION

10 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
11 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to provide
12 additional scholarships through the Vermont Trades Scholarship Program
13 created in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 14.

14 * * * Vermont Training Program * * *

15 Sec. 19. VERMONT TRAINING PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

16 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$5,000,000 is appropriated from the
17 General Fund to the Vermont Training Program to fulfill Vermont's obligation
18 to procure incentives in accordance with the Creating Helpful Incentives to
19 Produce Semiconductors for America (CHIPS) Act.

1 * * * Credential of Value * * *

2 Sec. 20. CREDENTIAL OF VALUE GOAL; PUBLIC-PRIVATE
3 PARTNERSHIP; APPROPRIATION

4 (a) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$350,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to continue work
6 pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 39 in support of the State’s
7 goal articulated in 10 V.S.A. § 546 that 70 percent of working-age Vermonters
8 hold a credential of value by 2025.

9 (b) On or before December 15, 2023, the Corporation or its contractor shall
10 report to the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction regarding the use of
11 funds, activities performed, and outcomes achieved pursuant to this section.

12 * * * United Way; Working Bridges * * *

13 Sec. 21. WORKING BRIDGES; APPROPRIATION

14 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$255,026.00 is appropriated from the
15 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services for a subgrant to the United
16 Way of Lamoille County to expand resource coordination for employee
17 stability through its Working Bridges program.

18 * * * Healthcare Workforce * * *

19 Sec. 22. 18 V.S.A. § 39 is added to read:

20 § 39. VERMONT PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE

21 PRACTITIONER FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM

1 (a) As used in this section:

2 (1) “Corporation” means the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
3 established in 16 V.S.A. § 2821.

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

6 (3) “Eligible school” means an approved postsecondary education
7 institution, as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 2822.

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

11 (5) “Program” means the Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse
12 Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive Program created under this section.

13 (b) The Vermont Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable
14 Loan Incentive Program is created and shall be administered by the
15 Department of Health in collaboration with the Corporation. The Program
16 provides forgivable loans to students enrolled in a master’s program at an
17 eligible school who commit to working as a psychiatric mental health nurse
18 practitioner in this State and who meet the eligibility requirements in
19 subsection (d) of this section.

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

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

7 (1) be enrolled at an eligible school in a program, whether through in-
8 person or remote instruction, that leads to a master's degree or specialty in
9 psychiatric mental health;

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

12 (3) agree to work as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner in
13 Vermont for a minimum of one year following licensure for each year of
14 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 subdivision (3) of this subsection;

19 (5) have completed the Program's application form and the Free
20 Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), in accordance with a schedule
21 determined by the Corporation; and

1 (6) have provided such other documentation as the Corporation may
2 require.

3 (e) If an eligible individual fails to serve as a psychiatric mental health
4 nurse practitioner in this State in compliance with the Program for a period that
5 would entitle the individual to the full forgivable loan benefit received by the
6 individual, other than for good cause as determined by the Corporation in
7 consultation with the Vermont Department of Health, then the individual shall
8 receive only partial loan forgiveness for a pro rata portion of the loan pursuant
9 to the terms of the interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the
10 individual at the time of entering the Program.

11 (g) The Corporation shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines
12 necessary to implement the provisions of this section, including maximum
13 forgivable loan amounts.

14 Sec. 23. PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER
15 FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE PROGRAM;
16 APPROPRIATION

17 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
18 General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for the Vermont

1 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Forgivable Loan Incentive

2 Program created in 18 V.S.A. § 39.

3 Sec. 24. EMS TRAINING; APPROPRIATION

4 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 General Fund to the Department of Health to provide training for emergency
6 medical services personnel.

7 Sec. 25. VERMONT NURSING FORGIVABLE LOAN INCENTIVE
8 PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

9 In fiscal year 2024, the following amounts are appropriated for forgivable
10 loans for nursing students under the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan
11 Incentive Program established in 18 V.S.A. § 34:

12 (1) the amount of \$3,000,000.00 in Global Commitment funds is
13 appropriated to the Department of Health for forgivable loans for nursing
14 students under the Program;

15 (2) the amount of \$1,304,400.00 is appropriated from the General Fund
16 to the Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
17 State match for the Program; and

18 (3) the amount of \$1,695,600.00 in federal funds is appropriated to the
19 Agency of Human Services, Global Commitment appropriation for the
20 Program.

1 Sec. 26. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; POSITION;

2 APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2024 the amount of \$170,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services to provide one additional year
5 of funding for the classified, three-year limited-service Health Care Workforce
6 Coordinator position created in the Agency of Human Services, Office of
7 Health Care Reform, pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 34(a).

8 Sec. 27. 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 29e is amended to read:

9 Sec. 29e. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED

10 AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE

11 DEVELOPMENT

12 (a) In fiscal year 2023, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from
13 the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery
14 Funds to the Agency of Human Services to be distributed to the designated and
15 specialized service agencies equitably based on each agency’s proportion of
16 full-time-equivalent (FTE) ~~mental health and substance use disorder treatment~~
17 staff to the total number of FTE ~~mental health and substance use disorder~~
18 ~~treatment~~ staff across all designated and specialized service agencies statewide.
19 The designated and specialized service agencies shall use these funds for loan
20 repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of
21 high-quality staff to support access to services ~~mental health and substance use~~

1 ~~disorder treatment professionals available to Vermont residents in need of their~~
2 ~~services, as set forth in subsection (b) of this section.~~

3 (b)(1) Each designated and specialized service agency shall make the funds
4 received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section available to its current and
5 prospective employees as set forth in subdivisions (A) and (B) of this
6 subdivision (1) on a rolling basis in exchange for a one-year service obligation
7 ~~to provide mental health services or substance use disorder treatment services,~~
8 ~~or both,~~ at a designated or specialized service agency in this State. The funds
9 may be used for the following purposes:

10 (A) ~~student loan repayment for master's level clinicians, bachelor's-~~
11 ~~level direct service staff, and nurses; and~~

12 (B) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees ~~to become~~
13 ~~master's level clinicians, bachelor's level direct service staff, and nurses.~~

14 (2) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to the
15 current and prospective employees of designated and specialized service
16 agencies in the form of forgivable loans, with the debt forgiven upon the
17 employee's completion of the required service obligation.

18 (c) On or before March 1, ~~2023~~ 2024, the Agency of Human Services shall
19 make a presentation available to the House Committees on Appropriations, on
20 Health Care, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on

1 Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on the use of the funds appropriated
2 in this section.

3 Sec. 28. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; DESIGNATED

4 AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES; WORKFORCE

5 DEVELOPMENT; APPROPRIATION

6 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
7 General Fund to the Agency of Human Services for distribution to the
8 designated and specialized service agencies for student loan forgiveness and
9 tuition assistance pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 29e.

10 * * * Economic Development; Technical Assistance * * *

11 Sec. 29. 10 V.S.A. § 2 is added to read:

12 § 2. SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE

13 (a) There is created the Small Business Technical Assistance Exchange, a
14 business assistance program through which the regional development
15 corporations shall provide small- and mid-sized businesses with professional
16 and technical assistance:

17 (1) through in-house Business Navigators;

18 (2) through partnerships with organizations specializing in outreach to
19 mature workers, youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been
20 involved with the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color

1 Vermonters, New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations;

2 and

3 (3) through grants to private providers for professional services,

4 including:

5 (A) business operations, financial management, and grant writing;

6 (B) digital strategies;

7 (C) architecture and physical space design;

8 (D) reconfiguring manufacturing equipment and processes and

9 incorporating safety measures;

10 (E) technology and software consulting;

11 (F) legal and other professional services; and

12 (G) other technical assistance.

13 (b)(1) Through the Exchange, the regional development corporations shall
14 maintain a directory of, and build connections to, Vermont technical assistance
15 providers who have demonstrated the ability and expertise to assist businesses
16 with critical tools to grow and adapt their businesses to the ever-changing
17 business climate.

18 (2) The Exchange shall award technical assistance grants of not more
19 than \$5,000.00 per business for technical services from approved providers.

20 (3) To be eligible to receive technical assistance through the Exchange,
21 a business:

1 (A) must be a for-profit entity located in Vermont; and

2 (B) must have at least \$5,000.00 in average annual revenue.

3 (4) A business whose owner's income is higher than the federal labor
4 market area in which the business operates, as evidenced by a self-attestation
5 provided by the owner, shall provide a 50 percent match for the costs of
6 professional services funded by a grant.

7 (c) The regional development corporations shall:

8 (1) operate the Exchange to produce benefits for both the client
9 companies as well as the vendors providing the assistance; and

10 (2) conduct outreach and direct engagement to promote participation by
11 businesses in rural areas of this State and businesses owned by mature workers,
12 youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have been involved with
13 the correction system, Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color Vermonters,
14 New Americans, and other historically marginalized populations.

15 (d) The regional development corporations shall publish a report on the
16 activities and performance of the Exchange on or before January 15 and July
17 15 each year.

18 Sec. 30. RURAL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXCHANGE;

19 APPROPRIATION

20 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated from the
21 General Fund to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for a

1 subgrant to provide services and assistance through the Small Business
2 Technical Assistance Exchange created in 10 V.S.A. § 2.

3 * * * Economic Development; Vermont Arts Council * * *

4 Sec. 31. VERMONT ARTS COUNCIL; APPROPRIATION

5 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$72,000.00 is appropriated from the
6 General Fund to the Vermont Arts Council to provide a State match for
7 National Endowment for the Arts funding to enable the Council to continue its
8 work boosting the creative economy in Vermont.

9 * * * Brownfields * * *

10 Sec. 32. BROWNFIELDS FUNDING; USE IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

11 The Department of Economic Development shall use the \$10,000,000.00
12 appropriated in fiscal year 2024 for brownfields redevelopment for the
13 remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites to be used in the same
14 manner as the Brownfields Revitalization Fund established by 10 V.S.A.
15 § 6654 except, notwithstanding the grant limitations in 10 V.S.A. § 6654,
16 projects supported by this appropriation shall not be limited to a maximum
17 amount per site. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development
18 shall award the amount of \$1,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2024 to regional
19 planning commissions for the purposes of brownfields assessment. In
20 awarding funds under this section, the Secretary, in consultation with VAPDA,
21 shall select one regional planning commission to administer these funds. To

1 ensure statewide availability, the selected regional planning commission shall
2 subgrant to regional planning commissions with brownfield programs, with not
3 more than 10 percent of the funds being used for administrative purposes.

4 Sec. 33. 10 V.S.A. § 6654(e) is amended to read:

5 (e) A grant may be awarded by the Secretary of Commerce and
6 Community Development with the approval of the Secretary of Natural
7 Resources, provided that:

8 (1) A grant may not exceed \$50,000.00 for characterization and
9 assessment of a site.

10 (2) A grant may not exceed ~~\$200,000.00~~ \$500,000.00 for remediation of
11 a site.

12 (3) A grant may be used by an applicant to purchase environmental
13 insurance relating to the performance of the characterization, assessment, or
14 remediation of a Brownfield site in accordance with a corrective action plan
15 approved by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

16 (4) Financial assistance may be provided to applicants by developing a
17 risk sharing pool, an indemnity pool, or other insurance mechanism designed
18 to help applicants.

19 (5) All reports generated by financial assistance from the Brownfield
20 Revitalization Fund, including site assessments, site investigations, feasibility
21 studies, corrective action plans, and completion reports shall be provided as

1 hard copies to the Secretaries of Commerce and Community Development and
2 of Natural Resources.

3 * * * Economic Development; New Relocating Employee * * *

4 Sec. 34. 10 V.S.A. § 4 is amended to read:

5 § 4. NEW RELOCATING EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

6 * * *

7 (e) As used in this section:

8 * * *

9 (2) “Relocating employee” means an individual who meets the
10 following criteria:

11 (A)(i) ~~On or after July 1, 2021~~ the individual is a new relocating
12 employee who meets the following criteria:

13 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State;

14 (II) the individual becomes a full-time employee at a Vermont
15 location of a for-profit or nonprofit business organization domiciled or
16 authorized to do business in this State, or of a State, municipal, or other public
17 sector employer; and

18 (III) the employer attests to the Agency that, after reasonable
19 time and effort, the employer was unable to fill the employee’s position from
20 among Vermont applicants; or

1 (ii) ~~on or after February 1, 2022~~ the individual is a new remote
2 employee who meets the following criteria:

3 (I) the individual becomes a full-time resident of this State; and

4 (II) the individual is a full-time employee of an out-of-state
5 business and performs the majority of ~~his or her~~ the employee's employment
6 duties remotely from a home office or a co-working space located in this State.

7 (B) The individual receives gross salary or wages that equal or
8 exceed the Vermont livable wage rate calculated pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 526.

9 (C) The individual is subject to Vermont income tax.

10 * * * Economic Development;

11 Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant Program * * *

12 Sec. 35. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. H.18, as amended by 2022 Acts
13 and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 46, is further amended to read:

14 Sec. H.18. COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND REVITALIZATION
15 GRANT PROGRAM

16 * * *

17 (b) Eligible applicants.

18 * * *

19 (3) The following are ineligible to apply for a grant:

20 (A) a State or local government-operated business, unless affiliated
21 with, or representative of, an applying municipality's water district;

1 (B) a business that, together with any affiliated business, owns or
2 operates more than 20 locations, regardless of whether those locations do
3 business under the same name or within the same industry; and

4 (C) a publicly traded company.

5 * * *

6 * * * Rural Industry Development Grant Fund * * *

7 Sec. 36. 10 V.S.A. § 6 is added to read:

8 § 6. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

9 (a) Creation; purpose.

10 (1) A Rural Industry Development Grant Program is created within the
11 Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide grant funding
12 through local development corporations for business relocation and expansion
13 efforts, including the purchase, demolition, and renovation of property for
14 industrial use.

15 (2)(A) There is established a Rural Industry Development Special Fund
16 comprising amounts appropriated to the Fund, contributions from other
17 sources, and the return of principal from the sale of any property invested
18 through the Program.

19 (B) Monies in the Fund shall be available to Agency to make grants
20 through the Program to assist local development corporations with business
21 relocation and expansion efforts throughout Vermont.

1 (C) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, interest
2 earned and any remaining balance at the end of the fiscal year shall be retained
3 by the Fund and carried forward in the Fund.

4 (b) Grant considerations. In making grant awards, the Agency shall
5 consider:

6 (1) the real estate needs of growing and relocating businesses, including
7 nonprofit organizations, in the applicant's region;

8 (2) the ability of the proposed project to meet the site-specific needs of
9 businesses considering whether to expand or locate in this State;

10 (3) the funding that the applicant has identified, or secured, to leverage a
11 grant award; and

12 (4) the readiness of an applicant to move a project forward.

13 (c) Eligible applicants; priority.

14 (1) To be eligible for a grant, an applicant must be a local development
15 corporation, as defined in subdivision 212(10) of this title, located within this
16 State.

17 (2) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development may
18 designate projects and agreements as first priority based on rural communities
19 that continue to experience insufficient economic and grand list growth.

20 (d) Eligible activities. A grant recipient may use funding for the following:

21 (1) to purchase land for potential industrial use;

1 (2) for the costs of site development, permitting, or providing
2 infrastructure for property the recipient owns;

3 (3) for the equity investment required for a loan transaction through the
4 Vermont Economic Development Authority under 10 V.S.A. chapter 12,
5 subchapter 3; or

6 (4) for the matching requirement of another State or federal grant
7 consistent with this section.

8 (e) Application; market assessment.

9 (1) An applicant shall include in its application a local and regional
10 market assessment that demonstrates reasonable need for the proposed
11 development and identifies imminent, potential, or existing business growth
12 opportunities.

13 (2) An applicant shall submit the following to demonstrate a readiness to
14 begin and complete the proposed project:

15 (A) community and regional support for the project;

16 (B) that grant funding is needed to complete the proposed project;

17 (C) an ability to manage the project, with requisite experience and a
18 plan for fiscal viability; and

19 (D) a description of the permitting required to proceed with the
20 project and a plan for obtaining the permits.

21 (f) Awards; amount.

1 (1) An award shall not exceed the lesser of \$1,000,000 or 20 percent of
2 the total project cost.

3 (2) A recipient may combine grant funds with funding from other
4 sources.

5 (3) The Agency shall release grant funds upon determining that the
6 applicant has met all application conditions and requirements.

7 (4) A grant recipient may apply for additional grant funds if future
8 amounts are appropriated for the Program and the funds are for a separate but
9 eligible use.

10 (g) Deed restrictions; property sales. The Agency shall include deed
11 restrictions that require the return of the principal amount of the grant to the
12 Special Fund and may require the payment of a percentage of the sales profit.

13 Sec. 37. RURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUND;

14 APPROPRIATION

15 In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$5,000,000.00 is transferred from the
16 General Fund to the Rural Industry Development Grant Fund created in 10
17 V.S.A. § 6.

18 * * * Better Places * * *

19 Sec. 38. 24 V.S.A. § 2799 is amended to read:

20 § 2799. BETTER PLACES PROGRAM; CROWD GRANTING

1 (a)(1) There is created the Better Places Program within the Department of
2 Housing and Community Development, and the Better Places Fund, which the
3 Department shall manage pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5.

4 (2) The purpose of the Program is to utilize crowdfunding to spark
5 community revitalization through collaborative grantmaking for projects that
6 create, activate, or revitalize public spaces.

7 (3) The Department may administer the Program in coordination with
8 and support from other State agencies and nonprofit and philanthropic partners.

9 (b) The Fund is composed of the following:

10 (1) State or federal funds appropriated by the General Assembly;

11 (2) gifts, grants, or other contributions to the Fund; and

12 (3) any interest earned by the Fund.

13 (c) As used in this section, “public space” means an area or place that is
14 open and accessible to all people with no charge for admission and includes
15 village greens, squares, parks, community centers, town halls, libraries, and
16 other publicly accessible buildings and connecting spaces such as sidewalks,
17 streets, alleys, and trails.

18 (d)(1) The Department of Housing and Community Development shall
19 establish an application process, eligibility criteria, and criteria for prioritizing
20 assistance for awarding grants through the Program.

1 (2) The Department may award a grant to a municipality, a nonprofit
2 organization, or a community group with a fiscal sponsor for a project that is
3 located in or serves a designated downtown, village center, new town center, or
4 neighborhood development area that will create a new public space or
5 revitalize or activate an existing public space.

6 (3) The Department may award a grant to not more than ~~one project~~
7 three projects per calendar year within a municipality.

8 (4) The minimum amount of a grant award is \$5,000.00, and the
9 maximum amount of a grant award is \$40,000.00.

10 (5) The Department shall develop matching grant eligibility
11 requirements to ensure a broad base of community and financial support for
12 the project, subject to the following:

13 (A) A project shall include in-kind support and matching funds raised
14 through a crowdfunding approach that includes multiple donors.

15 (B) An applicant may not donate to its own crowdfunding campaign.

16 (C) A donor may not contribute more than \$10,000.00 or 35 percent
17 of the campaign goal, whichever is less.

18 (D) An applicant shall provide matching funds raised through
19 crowdfunding of not less than 33 percent of the grant award.

20 (e) The Department of Housing and Community Development, with the
21 assistance of a fiscal agent, shall distribute funds under this section in a manner

1 that provides funding for projects of various sizes in as many geographical
2 areas of the State as possible.

3 (f) The Department of Housing and Community Development may use up
4 to 15 percent of any appropriation to the Fund from the General Fund to assist
5 with crowdfunding, administration, training, and technological needs of the
6 Program.

7 * * * Downtown Development * * *

8 Sec. 39. 24 V.S.A. § 2792(d) is amended to read:

9 (d) The Department shall provide staff and administrative support to the
10 State Board, ~~and~~ shall produce guidelines to direct municipalities seeking to
11 obtain designation under this chapter, and shall pay per diem compensation for
12 board members pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b).

13 Sec. 40. 24 V.S.A. § 2793(b) is amended to read:

14 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
15 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
16 application, the State Board shall designate a downtown development district if
17 the State Board finds in its written decision that the municipality has:

18 * * *

19 Sec. 41. 24 V.S.A. § 2793a(b) is amended to read:

20 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
21 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed

1 application, the State Board shall designate a village center if the State Board
2 finds the applicant has met the requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

3 Sec. 42. 24 V.S.A. § 2793b(b) is amended to read:

4 (b) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
5 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
6 application, the State Board shall designate a new town center development
7 district if the State Board finds, with respect to that district, the municipality
8 has:

9 * * *

10 Sec. 43. 24 V.S.A. § 2793e(d) is amended to read:

11 (d) ~~Within 45 days of receipt of a completed application~~ Upon the first
12 meeting of the State Board held after 45 days of receipt of a completed
13 application, for designation of a neighborhood development area, the State
14 Board, after opportunity for public comment, shall approve a neighborhood
15 development area if the Board determines that the applicant has met the
16 requirements of this section.

17 * * * Secretary of State; One-Stop Portal * * *

18 Sec. 44. 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 196, Sec. 1, as amended by 2019 Acts
19 and Resolves No. 80, Sec. 13, is further amended to read:

20 Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

1 (a) The Secretary of ~~State~~ Digital Services shall serve as the chair of a
2 steering committee, composed of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of
3 Commerce and Community Development, the Secretary of Administration,
4 and the Secretary of Digital Services or their designees.

5 (b) The ~~Secretary of State, in collaboration with the~~ steering committee,
6 and in collaboration with other State agencies and departments and interested
7 stakeholders ~~as necessary~~, shall:

8 (1) review and consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps
9 to enhance the Secretary of State's one-stop business portal for businesses,
10 entrepreneurs, and citizens to provide information about starting and operating
11 a business in Vermont; and

12 (2) submit on or before December 15, ~~2019~~ 2023:

13 (A) a design proposal that includes a project scope, timeline,
14 roadmap, and cost projections;

15 (B) any statutory or regulatory changes needed to implement the
16 proposal; and

17 (C) a sustainable funding model for the portal.

18 (c) The steering committee shall evaluate the cost and efficacy, and
19 integrate into the current one-stop portal to the extent feasible, features that:

1 (1) enhance State websites to simplify registrations and provide a ~~clear~~
2 comprehensive, one-stop compilation of other State business requirements,
3 including permits and licenses;

4 (2) implement a data collection component that offers the registrant the
5 option to self-identify, and make available to the public through the business
6 search function, demographic information concerning ownership of the
7 business, including whether the business is woman-owned, veteran-owned,
8 BIPOC-owned, LGBTQ-owned, or minority-owned;

9 (3) simplify the mechanism for making payments to the State by
10 allowing a person to pay amounts ~~he or she~~ the person owes to the State for
11 taxes, fees, or other charges to a single recipient within State government;

12 ~~(3)~~(4) simplify annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make
13 a single filing to a single recipient within State government and check a box if
14 nothing substantive has changed from the prior year;

15 ~~(4)~~(5) provide guidance, assistance with navigation, and other support to
16 persons who are forming or operating a small business;

17 ~~(5)~~(6) after registration, provide information about additional and
18 ongoing State requirements and a point of contact to discuss questions or
19 explore any assistance needed;

1 ~~(6)~~(7) provide guidance and information about State and federal
2 programs and initiatives, as well as State partner organizations and Vermont-
3 based businesses of interest; and

4 ~~(7)~~(8) map communication channels for project updates, including
5 digital channels such as e-mail, social media, and other communications.

6 (d) All State agencies and departments shall designate a single employee or
7 team of employees who are charged with the duty to provide assistance to the
8 steering committee upon its request.

9 (e) The steering committee shall focus its review on providing services
10 through the one-stop business portal primarily for the benefit of businesses
11 with 20 or fewer employees.

12 (f) The Agency of Digital Services shall assign a project manager or
13 business analyst to report directly to the Secretary of State to assist with the
14 implementation of this act through June 30, ~~2020~~ 2025 for the purpose of
15 developing and implementing a one-stop navigable portal for businesses,
16 entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting a business in
17 Vermont, and to provide ongoing support to businesses interfacing with State
18 government.

19 Sec. 45. EFFECTIVE DATE

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