

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 106
3 entitled “An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through
4 community schools” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended by
6 striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the
7 following:

8 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

9 This act shall be called the “Community Schools Act.”

10 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

11 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

12 (1) Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to
13 achieve their dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every child
14 deserves a public school that fully delivers on that promise.

15 (2) According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than
16 half of the nation’s schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning
17 they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, a percentage that has risen steadily
18 in recent decades. According to the Vermont Agency of Education, an average
19 of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions during the 2019–2020
20 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. As a result, some

1 schoolchildren face more challenges than others in succeeding in school and in
2 life.

3 (3) Community schools facilitate the coordination of comprehensive
4 programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of
5 students and families, such as substance misuse, lack of stable housing,
6 inadequate medical and dental care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence,
7 so students can do their best.

8 (4) According to research reports from the Learning Policy Institute, the
9 four key pillars of the community schools approach, which are integrated
10 student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,
11 active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and
12 practices, promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools as
13 well as address out-of-school barriers to learning.

14 (5) This research also shows that community school interventions can
15 result in improvements in a variety of student outcomes, including attendance,
16 academic achievement (including reducing racial and economic achievement
17 gaps), and high school graduation rates, and can meet the Every Student
18 Succeeds Act standard of “evidence-based” approaches to support schools
19 identified for comprehensive and targeted support and intervention.

20 (6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on
21 investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community

1 coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school
2 (Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study;
3 APEX and Community School Partnership; 2019). Every dollar invested in
4 programs and support (including medical, dental, and social services;
5 afterschool and summer enrichment; parent engagement; and early childhood
6 services) can yield up to \$15.00 in return (Community Schools as an Effective
7 School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence; Anna Maier, Julia
8 Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and Livia Lam; 2017).

9 (7) According to the Learning Policy Institute, “establishing community
10 schools” is one of 10 recommended strategies for restarting and rethinking the
11 role of public education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community
12 schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed,
13 well-coordinated supports and services that help students and families with
14 increasingly complex needs.

15 (8) Community schools have been established in many states and
16 settings, from New York City to Chicago and Los Angeles. But the approach
17 has also been successful in rural communities. In McDowell County, West
18 Virginia (population 22,000), community schools are part of a public-private
19 partnership, a collaboration between state government, nonprofit agencies,
20 businesses, and philanthropic foundations, that aims to “make educational
21 improvement the route to a brighter economic future.” The national nonprofit

1 Rural School and Community Trust is an active advocate for expanding this
2 model in rural areas, calling the relationship between good schools and
3 thriving communities “crucial.” In Vermont, a growing number of schools are
4 implementing or exploring the model, from Molly Stark Elementary in
5 Bennington, which offers school-based health services, extended hours,
6 summer school, and family learning activities, to the school-based health
7 center in Winooski.

8 (9) Recognizing that literacy proficiency is a foundational learning skill,
9 community schools can advance the State goal of improving literacy for all
10 students in the State. Achieving this goal will require a multiyear and
11 multidimensional effort requiring continued focus by the General Assembly,
12 the Administration, and school leaders, and community schools are an
13 important component of that effort.

14 (b) Purpose. This act provides funding for the implementation of
15 community school programs that provide students with equitable access to a
16 high-quality education and creates the Task Force on Universal School Lunch.

17 Sec. 3. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS; FUNDING

18 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

19 (1) “Community school coordinator” means a person who:

1 (A) is a full-time or part-time staff member serving in an eligible
2 school or in a school district or supervisory union with an eligible school and
3 appointed in accordance with Vermont law; and

4 (B) is responsible for the identification, implementation, and
5 coordination of a community school program, subject to the operational and
6 reporting structure of the community school coordinator’s employer.

7 (2) “Community school program” means a program offered at a public
8 elementary or secondary school that includes all four of the following:

9 (A) integrated student supports, which address out-of-school barriers
10 to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and
11 providers, coordinated by a community school coordinator, which may include
12 access to services such as medical, dental, vision care, and mental health
13 services, or access to counselors to assist with housing, transportation,
14 nutrition, immigration, or criminal justice issues;

15 (B) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, which
16 may include before-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programs, that
17 provide additional academic instruction, individualized academic support,
18 enrichment activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize real-world
19 learning and community problem-solving and that may include art, music,
20 drama, creative writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science,

1 tutoring and homework help, and recreational programs that enhance and are
2 consistent with the school’s curriculum;

3 (C) active family and community engagement, which brings
4 students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s
5 education and makes the school a community hub, providing adults with a
6 facility to access educational opportunities they want, which shall include
7 access to evidence-based literacy instruction and may include coordinating
8 services with outside providers to offer English as a second language classes,
9 green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, financial literacy,
10 career counseling, job skills training, services for substance misuse, and other
11 programs that bring community members into the building for meetings or
12 events; and

13 (D) collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of
14 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies
15 that shall, at a minimum, leverage the multitiered system of supports and
16 include a community school coordinator and a representative of families in the
17 community, and may include school, school district, and other leadership or
18 governance teams; teacher learning communities; and other staff to manage the
19 multiple, complex, joint work of school and community organizations.

20 (3) “Eligible recipient” means either a school district with an eligible
21 school or supervisory union with an eligible school.

1 (4) “Eligible school” means a public elementary or secondary school
2 that:

3 (A) has a student body where at least 40 percent of students are
4 eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National
5 School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.; or

6 (B) has been identified for comprehensive or equity support and
7 intervention under Section 1111(c)(4)(D) of the Elementary and Secondary
8 Education Act of 1965 or otherwise identified by the State as in need of
9 additional support.

10 (5) “Site-based leadership team” means an interdisciplinary, school-
11 based leadership team that includes the school principal, the community school
12 coordinator, teachers, other school employees, families, community partners,
13 nonprofit organizations, unions, and neighboring community residents that
14 guides collaborative planning, implementation, and oversight of the
15 community school program.

16 (b) Funding authorization. The Secretary of Education is authorized to
17 provide annual funding of up to \$110,000.00 a year for a period of three years
18 for each recipient of the funding to use the funding as required under
19 subsection (d) of this section.

20 (c) Funding administration.

1 (1) Subject to subdivision (2) of this subsection, the Secretary of
2 Education shall determine which eligible recipients shall receive funding and
3 the amount of funding, and the Secretary shall provide the funding on or before
4 September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 to recipients. The Secretary may
5 deny or reduce second- and third-year funding if the Secretary finds that the
6 recipient has made insufficient progress towards developing and implementing
7 a community school program. In determining which eligible recipients shall
8 receive funding, the Secretary shall take into account relative need, based on
9 the extent to which community school program services are needed and the
10 extent to which the eligible recipient seeks to offer them.

11 (2) In determining which eligible recipients shall receive funding and
12 the amount of funding and to advance the principles for Vermont’s trauma-
13 informed system of care under 33 V.S.A. § 3401, the Secretary of Education
14 shall collaborate with the Director of Trauma Prevention and Resilience
15 Development and the Vermont Child and Family Trauma Work Group.

16 (3) The Agency of Education shall inform all eligible recipients of the
17 availability of funding under this act and, for those eligible recipients most in
18 need of this funding, shall educate these eligible recipients on the community
19 school program and its benefits. The Agency of Education shall also advise all
20 eligible recipients of other sources of funding that may be available to advance
21 the purpose of this act.

1 (d) Use of funding.

2 (1) A recipient of funding under this act shall use the funding to:

3 (A) if a needs and assets assessment has not been conducted within
4 the prior three years that substantially conforms with the requirements in this
5 subdivision, then, in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, conduct
6 a needs and assets assessment that includes:

7 (i) where available, and where applicable, student demographic,
8 academic achievement, and school climate data, disaggregated by major
9 demographic groups, including race, ethnicity, English language proficiency,
10 students with individualized education plans, and students eligible for free or
11 reduced-price lunch status;

12 (ii) access to and need for integrated student supports;

13 (iii) access to and need for expanded and enriched learning time
14 and opportunities;

15 (iv) school funding information, including federal, State, local,
16 and private education funding and per-pupil spending, based on actual salaries
17 of personnel assigned to the eligible school;

18 (v) information on the number, qualifications, and stability of
19 school staff, including the number and percentage of fully certified teachers
20 and rates of teacher turnover; and

1 (vi) active family and community engagement information,

2 including:

3 (I) family and community needs based on surveys, information
4 from public meetings, or information gathered by other means;

5 (II) measures of family and community engagement in the
6 eligible schools, including volunteering in schools, attendance at back-to-
7 school nights, and parent-teacher conferences;

8 (III) efforts to provide culturally and linguistically relevant
9 communication between schools and families; and

10 (IV) access to and need for family and community engagement
11 activities;

12 (B) hire a community school coordinator to, in collaboration with the
13 site-based leadership team, develop and implement a community school
14 program or designate a community school coordinator from existing personnel
15 and, in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, augment work
16 already being performed to develop and implement a community school
17 program; and

18 (C) if the recipient has not fully implemented positive behavioral
19 integrated supports under 16 V.S.A. § 2902, provide professional development
20 to staff on positive behavioral integrated supports and implement those
21 supports.

1 (2) A recipient of funding under this act may use the funding to, in
2 collaboration with the site-based leadership team, develop and implement a
3 plan to improve literacy outcomes, and objectively assess those outcomes.

4 (3) If a needs and assets assessment has not been conducted under
5 subdivision (1)(A) of this subsection within the prior three years, the first year
6 of funding shall be used to conduct the needs and assets assessment of the
7 school to determine what is necessary to develop a community school program
8 and an action plan to implement the community school program. During the
9 second and third years of the funding, the community school coordinator shall,
10 in collaboration with the site-based leadership team, oversee the
11 implementation of the community school program.

12 (e) Evaluation.

13 (1) At the end of each year of funding, each recipient shall undergo an
14 evaluation designed by the Agency of Education.

15 (2) On or before each of December 15, 2022 and 2024, the Agency of
16 Education shall report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the
17 impact of the funding under this act. The report shall be made publicly
18 available on the Agency of Education’s website.

19 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

20 (a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$3,399,000.00 of the amount
21 allocated to the Agency of Education from the American Rescue Plan Act of

1 2021 pursuant to Section 2001(f)(1), 2021, Pub. L. No. 117-2 for the funding
2 under this act on or before September 1 of each of 2021, 2022, and 2023 under
3 Sec. 3 of this act.

4 (b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

5 (1) not more than one percent of the funds appropriated under
6 subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for
7 informational and technical assistance, such as the availability and use of
8 funding for eligible recipients as defined under Sec. 3 of this act; and

9 (2) not more than two percent of the funds appropriated under
10 subsection (a) of this section for each of fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for
11 the evaluations required under Sec. 3 of this act.

12 Sec. 5. TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSAL SCHOOL LUNCH; REPORT

13 (a) Creation. There is created the Task Force on Universal School Lunch.
14 The Task Force shall make recommendations on how, not later than the 2026–
15 2027 school year, to achieve the goal of providing universal school lunch for
16 all public school students at no cost to the students or their families.

17 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the:

18 (1) Secretary of Education or designee;

19 (2) Secretary of Human Services or designee; and

20 (3) Secretary of Agriculture or designee.

1 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall make recommendations on
2 how, not later than the 2026–2027 school year, to achieve the goal of providing
3 universal school lunch for all public school students at no cost to the students
4 or their families and shall perform the following tasks:

5 (1) recommend funding sources for universal school lunch;

6 (2) recommend what data should be collected by local education
7 agencies, school districts, and schools to qualify for federal funds based on
8 student poverty, the means by which the data should be collected, the
9 frequency of collection, and how this data should be reported to the Agency of
10 Education and the frequency of this reporting;

11 (3) consider how other states offer and fund universal school meals at no
12 cost to students or their families; and

13 (4) meet with Vermont’s federal delegation to discuss what changes
14 could be made to federal law and regulations to more readily facilitate
15 universal school meals.

16 (d) Collaboration. In performing its duties under this section, the Task
17 Force shall collaborate with Hunger Free Vermont, the School Nutrition
18 Association of Vermont, the Vermont Superintendents Association, the
19 Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Council of Special
20 Education Administrators, the Vermont Principals’ Association, and the
21 Vermont-National Education Association.

1 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2022, the Task Force shall submit a
2 written report to the House and Senate Committees on Education and on
3 Appropriations, the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, and the
4 Senate Committee on Agriculture with its findings and any recommendations
5 for legislative action.

6 (f) Meetings.

7 (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Task
8 Force to occur on or before October 10, 2021.

9 (2) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the
10 first meeting.

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

12 (4) The Task Force shall meet not more than eight times.

13 (5) The Task Force shall expire on January 16, 2022.

14 (g) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,
15 and legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

16 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

17 This act shall take effect on passage.

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20 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE