

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred Senate
3 Bill No. 162 entitled “An act relating to services for individuals who are Deaf,
4 Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind” respectfully reports that it has considered the
5 same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the
6 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. PURPOSE

8 The Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing closed in
9 September 2014. Prior to its closing, the Center provided comprehensive and
10 statewide educational, social, and support services to children, youth, and
11 adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind. These services included
12 the Austine School for the Deaf, which closed in June 2014; several regional
13 classrooms; consultant services for mainstreamed students; a parent-infant
14 program; a family mentoring program; adult services; and numerous other
15 support options. While efforts are underway to replace at least some of the
16 discontinued services, it remains unclear whether the educational, support, and
17 service needs of children and other persons in the State who are deaf, hard of
18 hearing, or DeafBlind are currently being met. Over ten percent of Americans
19 experience some degree of hearing loss, which represents over 70,000
20 Vermonters. It is the purpose of this act to establish the position of the Deaf,
21 Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director to serve as a central

1 coordinator and resource for members of the deaf, hard of hearing, and
2 DeafBlind community.

3 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. chapter 16 is amended is read:

4 CHAPTER 16. ~~VERMONT~~ SERVICES FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF,
5 HARD OF HEARING, AND OR DEAFBLIND ADVISORY COUNCIL

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7 § 1603. DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAFBLIND SERVICES

8 DIRECTOR

9 The position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Services Director
10 is established within the Department for the purpose of coordinating services
11 within the Agencies of Human Services and of Education for children, youth,
12 and adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and for their families.

13 The Director shall have the following responsibilities:

14 (1) creating and administering a referral network for services for persons
15 who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and for their families, including
16 health, rehabilitative, education, employment, and interpreter services;

17 (2) coordinating with the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and
18 DeafBlind Advisory Council to provide annual recommendations to the
19 Governor, including identifying system strengths and gaps in services;

1 (3) creating and distributing outreach and educational materials about
2 available resources in a manner that is accessible to persons who are deaf, hard
3 of hearing, or DeafBlind;

4 (4) establishing effective and collaborative working relationships among
5 the staff of the Agencies of Human Services and of Education, service
6 providers, and community partners; and

7 (5) providing other coordination services that account for the differing
8 needs and attitudes of members of the deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind
9 community and their families.

10 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

11 The amount of \$89,347.00 is appropriated in State fiscal year 2019 for the
12 purpose of establishing the position of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and
13 DeafBlind Services Director pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 1603.

14 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

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1 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE