TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The Committee on Appropriations to which was referred House Bill No. 674 entitled "An act relating to the creation of a Vermont Sister State Program" respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the report of the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development be amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A. § 2479, in subsection (a), by striking out subdivision (2) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (2) to read as follows:

(2) The purpose of the Program is to strengthen Vermont's international engagement and to foster mutually beneficial relationships with national and subnational governments abroad, with a goal of promoting cultural exchange, economic development, and educational cooperation.

Second: In Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A. § 2479, in subdivision (d)(1), by striking out subdivisions (D) and (E) in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof three new subdivisions to be subdivisions (D), (E), and (F) to read as follows:

(D) a fixed-scoring system, including a rubric, to be uniformly applied by the Committee to evaluate all eligible applications;

(E) a memorandum of understanding template to be used and signed by the State and an approved Program partner that shall include a termination date; and

(F) any other necessary Program parameters, including the length of time for partner agreements to be in effect.

Third: In Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A. § 2479, in subdivision (d)(3), by striking out subdivision (B) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (B) to read as follows:

(B) If the Committee recommends that an application reviewed pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3) be approved, the Committee shall submit its recommendation to the Governor along with a copy of the application not later than 30 days after completing its review of the application. The Committee shall not send to the Governor an application that the Committee does not recommend be approved.

Fourth: In Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A. § 2479, in subdivision (d)(4)(A), by striking out the following sentence:

The Governor shall not review or approve of a Program application that the Committee recommended be disapproved.

Fifth: In Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A. § 2479, in subsection (d), by adding a new subdivision to be subdivision (5) to read as follows:

(5) Termination. The Committee shall have the sole authority to terminate an active Sister State Program partnership upon a majority vote of Committee members at a Committee meeting.

Sixth: In Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A. § 2479, by striking out subsection (f) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (f) to read as follows:

(f) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than eight meetings per year. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

(2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than eight meetings per year. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Seventh: By striking out Sec. 2, repeal, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 2 to read as follows:

Sec. 2. 9 V.S.A. chapter 111B is amended to read:

CHAPTER 111B. TRADE COMMISSIONS

§ 4129. VERMONT-IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

(a) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is established within the State Treasurer's office to advance bilateral trade and investment between Vermont and Ireland. The Commission shall consist of ~~seven~~ nine members as follows:

(1) two members, appointed by the Governor;

(2) two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(3) two members, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees; ~~and~~

(4) the State Treasurer or designee;

(5) the Commissioner of Economic Development or designee; and

(6) the President of the University of Vermont or designee.

* * *

(c) The members of the Commission~~, except for the State Treasurer or designee,~~ appointed pursuant to subdivisions (a)(1)–(3) of this section:

(1) shall be appointed for terms of four years each and shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed, except that in order to achieve staggered terms, the two members appointed by the Governor shall serve initial terms of two years each and the two members appointed by the Speaker of the House shall serve initial terms of three years each~~.~~;

(2) ~~Members~~ may be reappointed~~.~~ upon the expiration of the member's term;

(3) ~~A member serves~~ serve at the pleasure of the member's appointing authority~~.~~; and

(4) ~~Not~~ shall consist of not more than two members ~~serving on the Commission may be members~~ of the General Assembly.

* * *

(f) The Commission, in coordination with the State Treasurer's office, shall submit a written report with its findings, results, and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly within one year ~~of~~ following its initial organizational meeting and on or before December 1 of each succeeding year for the activities of the current calendar year. The report shall also include a:

(1) disclosure listing any in-kind contributions received by specific members of the Commission through their work in the Commission in the current calendar year; and

(2) detailed accounting from the State Treasurer's office of the:

(A) administrative expenses that have been paid with funds raised by the Commission, pursuant to subsection (g) of this section; and

(B) funds raised and donations, grants, and bequests received through the Commission including the name, country of residence, and amount donated of each contributor.

(g)(1) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is authorized to raise funds, through direct solicitation or other fundraising events, alone or with other

groups, and accept donations, grants, and bequests from individuals, corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private organizations and institutions, to defray the Commission's administrative expenses ~~and to carry out its purposes as set forth in this chapter~~.

(2) The funds, donations, grants, or bequests received pursuant to ~~this chapter~~ subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be deposited in a bank account and allocated ~~annually~~ by the State Treasurer's office to defray the Commission's administrative expenses ~~and carry out its purposes~~. Any monies so withdrawn shall not be used for any purpose other than the payment of administrative expenses ~~under~~ incurred pursuant to this ~~chapter~~ section and shall be itemized and tracked for reporting purposes by the State Treasurer's office. Interest earned shall remain in the bank account. The State Treasurer shall include the balance of the account in the annual reporting required pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

(3) For purposes of this section, "administrative expenses" does not include any:

(A) expenses related to:

(i) campaign or election activity; or

(ii) food or beverages provided at official Commission meetings; or

(B) other expense that is not specific to the administrative functions of the Commission.

(h) Members of the Commission shall not receive any compensation or be entitled to reimbursement of expenses by the State of Vermont or from the fund managed by the State Treasurer pursuant to subsection (g) of this section for their service on the Commission.

Eighth: By adding a new section to be Sec. 2a to read as follows:

Sec. 2a. REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE VERMONT-IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

On or before December 1, 2029, the Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs with the following information:

(1) a summary of the accomplishments of the Commission since its inception;

(2) a detailed analysis as to how the Commission has served its legislative purposes pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(b); and

(3) an accounting on funds raised and details on gifts received pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(g) since the Commission's inception.

(Committee vote: _____)

_____

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE