



December 8, 2021

The Honorable Jill Krowinski
Speaker of the House
Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

The Honorable Becca Balint
President Pro Tempore
Vermont Senate
115 Main Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Speaker Krowinski and President Pro Tempore Balint:

Vermont's municipal law enforcement agencies are facing a recruitment and retention crisis that increasingly threatens to compromise their ability to operate effective law enforcement operations. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns' requests your support to expand the Vermont New Relocating Worker Grant Program to include law enforcement officers and recruits.

VLCT appreciates the work the leadership at the Vermont Department of Public Safety has already done to quantify and address the law enforcement recruitment and retention problem in state and municipal law enforcement operations. According to a DPS survey of Vermont's state and municipal law enforcement organizations, there has been a 14 percent decline in the total number of officers available for duty since 2018. That same survey revealed an anticipated increase in officer attrition by more than 50 percent in 2021 – from 91 departures in 2020 to an anticipated 159 departures in 2021. In a July 2021 memo, Executive Director of Public Policy for the Department of Public Safety, Jennifer Morrison, noted that these declines are not being offset by new recruits. Morrison stated that the training academy trained 51 new full-time officers in 2020 and only 23 in 2021, a "marked departure from the average of 73 officers certified annually."

Vermont's struggles retaining and attracting new law enforcement officers mirror national trends. A perfect storm has formed to threaten municipal law enforcement operational readiness as a general worker shortage, the stress of policing in today's environment, and political fights about policing have spurred early retirements, separations, and dissuaded recruits. VLCT members have shared several anecdotes about the difficulty finding officers resulting in "poaching" from other Vermont municipalities, leaving positions vacant, and reducing police services. The issue is impacting every corner of the state and every size municipality – from Burlington, to Hartford, to Windsor, to Chester. Members are offering their own recruitment and retention bonuses, finding ways to creatively recruit, and increasing wages. However, our municipalities would benefit greatly from a statewide, public effort to attract new recruits from outside Vermont borders.

The Vermont New Relocating Worker Grant program currently offers an incentive to people coming to Vermont to take a job in any one of 50 occupations identified by the Vermont

Department of Labor. The occupation list seems like an imperfect way to determine what occupations should be eligible for the incentive. It does not include law enforcement officers, but does include coaches, scouts, and amusement and recreation attendants. VLCT understands that the law authorizing the program would need to be amended to include additional occupations.

Including law enforcement officers in the list of eligible occupations would be a win-win for the state and our members. Our members would have a new coordinated state-wide tool to help them recruit – possibly attracting national attention. The state would attract new residents in good-paying jobs throughout the state.

The VLCT Board is eager to work with you and members of the Governor's administration to help our cities, towns and villages recruit the next generation of law enforcement leaders. As such, we've sent a similar request to Governor Phil Scott.

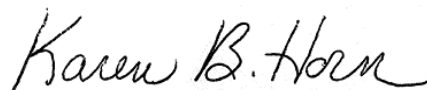
Members of the VLCT Board and staff would be pleased to discuss this topic further with you. Please feel contact Karen Horn at khorn@vlct.org or (802) 229-9111 should you wish to arrange a time to meet.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership to serve and strengthen Vermont's municipalities.

Sincerely,



Jessie Baker
President, Board of Directors
VLCT



Karen Horn
Director, Public Policy and Advocacy
VLCT

Cc:
The Honorable Michael Sirotkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Economic
Development, Housing and General Affairs
Vermont House of Representatives
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The Honorable Michael Marcotte
Chairman
House Committee on Commerce and
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