

To: The Joint Fiscal Committee

CC: Representative Michael Marcotte, Chair of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
Senator Ann Cummings, Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance
Senator Kesha Ram Hinsdale, Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs

From: Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges System

Date: July 21, 2023

Vermont State Colleges System, in partnership with the state, is working on creative and thoughtful approaches to unifying and modernizing our institutions so that we can meet the needs of our students for decades to come. Guided by the work of the state's *Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont*, the transformation efforts are entering their third and most challenging year to date, commencing with the launch of Vermont State University on July 1. As we continue with this work, we will be right sizing our campus operations and other assets and will continue to work to achieve financial and operational sustainability.

As part of this work, we today request that the Joint Fiscal Committee grant retroactive approval of the disposition of certain licenses owned by the Vermont State Colleges, pursuant to [30 V.S.A. § 8063 as applicable before July 1, 2023](#).

Radio Station Licenses

Many years ago, each of the four institutions which now comprise the new Vermont State University operated a campus radio station. Five years ago, Castleton decided to relinquish its license, given the needs and interests of students to learn streaming-based operations, rather than operations meeting FCC requirements. The Board of Trustees relinquished the license in a duly warned public meeting on March 23, 2019. In addition to the public notice of the action, VSC filed public notifications as required by the FCC. Public notice confirms the license was cancelled by the FCC on May 28, 2019.

More recently, Northern Vermont University made a similar decision to move away having two traditional campus radio stations. The VSC was approached by an interested purchaser for the Lyndon license and the parties entered into a sales agreement. Another entity is potentially interested in acquiring the Johnson license, but there is no firm commitment. The license associated with the former Vermont Technical College remains active, operating a college radio station on the Randolph campus.

After the sale of the Lyndon license was finalized, there was an inquiry about the applicability of [30 V.S.A. § 8063](#) to the sale. To be candid, we were not aware of this law at the time of the sale

of the Lyndon license sale nor the prior relinquishment of the Castleton license. We believe the disposition of these two radio stations was in the best interest of the VSC, and we seek retroactive approval for the disposition of WWLR (Lyndon) and WIUV (Castleton), to the extent previously required by 30 V.S.A. § 8063. Effective July 1, 2023, this statute was repealed as part of Act 53.

In conclusion, the VSC has determined that the described disposition of its FCC licenses is administratively and fiscally prudent. The licenses do not play a role in the educational mission of Vermont State University. Disposition of the licenses will reduce administrative demands, while receiving financial value at this critical time allows VSC to make the best use of these assets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "SZdatny". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sophie Zdatny
Chancellor, Vermont State Colleges System