



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

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S.148 – An act relating to environmental justice in Vermont

As recommended by the Senate Committee on Appropriations

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/Senate%20Appropriations/Bills/S.148/S.148~none~As%20recommended%20by%20Senate%20Appropriations~3-18-2022.pdf>

Bill Summary

This bill would establish an environmental justice policy for the State of Vermont, which would require State agencies to have new environmental justice related responsibilities, establish the creation of a State environmental justice mapping tool, and establish a 17-member Advisory Council on Environmental Justice.

Fiscal impact

In Fiscal Year 2023, this bill appropriates \$700,000 from the General Fund. Of this appropriation, \$500,000 would be appropriated to the Agency of Natural Resources for the cost of developing the mapping tool. The remaining \$200,000 would be appropriated to the Agency of Natural Resources to fund two positions to assist in the development of the environmental justice policy and support the Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

Background and details

As drafted, JFO is not able to analyze further fiscal impact of this bill beyond its appropriations to State agencies without further information and details either from the bill or state agencies.

Funding of two positions

This bill appropriates funding for two positions to assist in the development of the environmental justice policy and support the Environmental Justice Advisory Council. This appropriation shall fund an existing position in the Agency and a second position which the Agency is authorized to repurpose from an existing position.

Environmental justice mapping tool

The bill would require the development and maintenance of an environmental justice mapping tool. This mapping tool is to be maintained by the Agency of Natural Resources.

Per diem payments

The bill establishes an Advisory Council that will be granted per diems. The compensation for this Council is not defined in the bill. For most state public boards and commissions, members receive a per diem of \$50 per day. However, the bill does not specify the level of per diems, so JFO is unable to estimate the precise impact on State resources.

Other costs

The bill also creates new responsibilities for state agencies to incorporate environmental justice considerations in their work. This includes that each State agency shall create and adopt a community engagement plan, submit annual summaries regarding environmental justice complaints, and may be required to direct certain investments towards environmental justice populations. The exact responsibilities and costs for each agency are unclear. As such, JFO is unable to identify precisely what their funding needs will be to administer those responsibilities. If agencies require additional resources to implement the responsibilities laid out in the bill, their additional resource needs would need to be approved as part of a future fiscal year budget process.