

February 19, 2024

To Members of the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry:

A native Vermonter, I'm a lifelong resident of the state: born, raised, educated, employed, and now retired. As a member of the 251 Club, I've traveled all throughout our beautiful state since childhood. In the words of President Calvin Coolidge in his post-flood speech of 1928 – and along with other historic figures, courageous ancestors, fellow residents and delighted visitors – *“Vermont is a state I love.”*

As such, I'm writing to express my concerns in regard to the potential of the H.128 Draft Bill to erode the protective features of Act 250 in relation to the designation of large event centers and other high volume commercial venues as **“accessory on farm businesses,”** offering them partial or total exemption from ACT 250 regulations.

My attention to the matter of the H.128 Draft Bill has been raised by the proposed construction of a large event center hosting 150 people for weddings, concerts and other high volume parties in an historic farm field in my quiet, dirt road, rural residential neighborhood. The negative impact on residents, the landscape, and the road itself – which is not suited for increased traffic or busses – cannot be stressed enough.

The road involved, like others in our community, is in need of long overdue repairs. Deterioration of the crushed slate surfacing, much-needed ditch reconstruction, erosion control, old and vulnerable culverts, botanical overgrowth and postponed mud season mitigation measures (due to unplanned, emergency repairs) all add up to a lengthy, time-consuming and costly list. The town has experienced financial burden due to disastrous weather events, an expansive network of aging dirt roads to repair and maintain for safe passage by residents, a low population to support the tax base, a long-standing reduction in the availability and elevated cost of quality materials, and an overworked, small road crew.

High volume event centers should be located in areas more appropriate for accommodating large numbers of people, commensurate vehicular traffic, infrastructure and maintenance, thoughtful consideration of residential proximity and preservation of the natural landscape. It doesn't make sense that a two-car, single-family home can be excluded from building a house in a rolling field in the countryside, but a large, high-activity event center hosting weddings, concerts and other parties may be deemed acceptable and exempt from ACT 250 regulations.

The purpose of Act 250 has always been to protect Vermont...its land, byways, waterways, residents, aesthetics, history and future. *Once lost, it can never be regained.* My hope is that Vermonters will continue to preserve our greatest treasure: the increasingly rare, pastoral and historic areas that form its very *identity*.

Let's work together with integrity and calm forethought to prevent the irreversible consequences of what may otherwise occur all throughout our uniquely green and "brave little state." Let's ensure that Vermont remains verdant, peaceful and pleasing for its residents, our children, their descendants and future visitors to come.

Respectfully,

Paula Kaiman
Middlesex, VT