

**To: Members, Senate Finance Committee**

**From: Karen Horn, Director Public Policy & Advocacy**

**Date: March 15, 2023**

**Re: S. 115 Miscellaneous Agricultural Subjects, Section 8**

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns, on behalf of its 247 member cities and towns, strongly urges you to eliminate Section 8 of S. 115.

Section 8 would exempt farms and silvicultural practices from municipal bylaws that establish fees and stormwater utilities for the management of stormwater related to drainage networks serving municipal roadways and water quality improvements to reduce pollutants from municipally owned impervious surfaces. The municipal stormwater fees that municipalities charge to all property owners are based on the fact that all receive a benefit from municipal stormwater management work and all need to pay in for clean water. Those stormwater utility or bylaw fees pay for stone lining ditches, replacing and building culverts, building settling ponds, redirecting runoff away from road networks, and other much more complex stormwater management features. They do not generally pay for operating costs.

Municipalities are mandated by state legislation to undertake the work to manage and mitigate stormwater runoff from municipal property and road networks. State grants and loans for stormwater management do not begin to cover the entire cost of such projects, or their maintenance. The only other source of funding for such municipal projects is the property tax. The property tax is limited because many entities that benefit from the management of stormwater on municipal properties are exempt from paying property taxes.

We urge you to honor the “all in” approach to municipal stormwater management in those towns that have adopted bylaws and fee requirements.