



I am writing to express my concerns regarding the data privacy legislation being marked up by the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee and its potential impact on my hotel business. As I have learned more about this bill, I have become increasingly worried about how it could disrupt our operations and limit our ability to serve and connect with our guests.

Our primary concern relates to the basic guest information we collect and store to maintain personal relationships with those who stay with us. The bill restricts data collection to “what is reasonably necessary and proportionate to provide or maintain a specific product or service requested by the consumer.” Under this standard, we are concerned that collecting an email address at check-in—or sending a follow-up email without explicit permission—could place us at risk of noncompliance, even when the intent is simply to stay in touch with our guests.

Over time, online travel agencies such as Expedia and Booking.com have eroded the direct relationships that hotels have worked hard to build with their customers. When guests book through these platforms, the Online Travel Agency (OTA) controls nearly all communication, ensuring loyalty remains with the platform rather than the hotel. In many cases, we do not receive guest contact information until they arrive to check in.

As a result, the check-in process is often our only opportunity to learn more about our guests. While collecting an email address may not be considered “reasonably necessary” to process payment, it is essential for building an ongoing relationship.

Collecting and safely managing these email addresses allows us to share information about special offers, packages, and local activities. Our monthly communications promote things to do in the area and highlight the Vermont experience. These efforts are among our most effective tools for generating repeat business. If new regulations restrict this type of communication, it will significantly weaken one of our most important marketing channels.

Like most tourism-related businesses, we rely heavily on digital advertising. With limited marketing resources, it is critical that we invest our budget as efficiently as possible. If this legislation hampers our ability to market effectively—particularly in ways that differ from neighboring states—it will put Vermont businesses at a disadvantage.

While Vermont is a unique destination, we compete directly with other tourism markets throughout New England. To remain competitive, we must be able to use the same marketing tools and methods as hotels in surrounding states. Other New England states have implemented data privacy laws, and it is important that Vermont’s approach aligns with tested standards. If this bill exceeds those frameworks, it raises the question of whether the added burden on small businesses delivers meaningful additional benefits to consumers.

I respectfully urge legislators to consider these impacts and to work toward a revised data privacy law that protects consumers while also reflecting best practices established elsewhere. A balanced approach will allow small businesses like mine to continue serving guests effectively while remaining compliant with reasonable privacy standards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Scott', with a large, stylized 'S' at the end.

Christopher M. Scott
President