

House Committee on Ways and Means
R. 34 Vermont State House
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Representatives Ancel, Branagan, Sharpe, Clarkson, Condn, Greshin, Johnson, Komline, Masland, Ram and Wilson:

The legislation addressing proposed Vermont bill S.221 is of paramount interest to me because I am a 2013 alumnae of the eta chapter of Tri Delta, a sorority that has been at the University of Vermont since 1893. Tri Delta has owned the house located at 143 South Willard St in Burlington since November 1934, during my undergraduate time at UVM I lived in this house from August 2010 until December 2011.

I am primarily concerned about the proposal to revoke fraternity and sorority tax exemption as the inability to pay high property taxes would effectively result in the closing-down of our home and sale of the property, likely to Champlain College or UVM. These homes are rich in Vermont history and hold a very special place in the hearts of our organizations. They serve as a venue for meetings, community service and philanthropy events, and educational programming. The fraternity and sorority housing also provides a more affordable alternative to on-campus student housing, and not only a more affordable but also a safer option than much of the off-campus housing in Burlington.

In my opinion the good work that fraternities and sororities do in the Burlington and greater Vermont community far outweighs the small sum this tax would collect. This proposal is not a sustainable option and the selling of these houses would be a devastating loss of history in Burlington. One of the values of our fraternities and sororities at UVM is service, this is a value we take very seriously and have been recognized on a national scale for the service work our chapters do for the community of Burlington. The chapter facilities serve an integral role in our service efforts.

Last year fraternity and sorority students at UVM donated over 21,000 hours of their time to service work and over \$140,000 of philanthropy dollars. Much of the time and money donated stayed close to home and in our wonderful state. In November we hosted our first turkey drive on campus and from it were able to donate 17 fourteen lb local, and antibiotic-free turkeys to the Chittenden Food Shelf. Every semester, often more than once a semester, our community gathers after a weekend that Burlington city may have been particularly affected by student impact (such as Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, Springfest) and do a community clean up. When I was a student I participated in a clean up April 2013 and 100 students donated their time to cleaning the streets of Burlington, we were able to clean 60 streets that day. We regularly dedicate our time to the Ronald McDonald House, to Women Helping Battered Women, to VT Make-A-Wish, and are always very happy to volunteer to give back to this community and state that means so much to us.

In terms of philanthropic endeavors my fraternity and sorority community brought the two largest philanthropy events at UVM to campus, Relay for Life in 2006 and Dance Marathon in 2013. Last year Relay for Life at UVM raised \$85,120 for cancer research, \$57,688 came from the efforts of the thirteen fraternities and sororities at UVM. Much of the fundraising events were hosted at our chapter facilities, and the survivor dinner is traditionally hosted at the Tri Delta house before

Relay begins. In February Dance marathon was brought to our campus, this event raises funds to support the families of Vermont children undergoing treatment for cancer. Largely due to the efforts of fraternity and sorority students, again much of their fundraising efforts held at chapter facilities, this event raised \$40,181. In addition to our dedication to local organizations, Tri Delta's national philanthropy is St. Jude. This academic year our Vermont chapter has donated \$14,306 to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Before St. Jude became our national philanthropy in 1999, Vermont Tri Delta has celebrated our long history of donating the money raised from our 24 hour Teeter-tot-athon we host every fall at the Tri Delta house to Camp Ta-Kum-Ta. As you can see having our chapter facilities plays a crucial role in serving as a venue for community service and philanthropy events, without these houses we would not be able to accomplish as much as we do.

Although I am no longer a collegiate sister of Tri Delta, I loved my time in the chapter and the friendships I developed with the women who I call my sisters. My Tri Delta experience has played a significant role in my decision to remain in Vermont after graduation. My family lives in Rhode Island but there is no Tri Delta alumnae group or chapter there, I knew if I returned there after graduation I would miss my sorority sisters and the family I made here. Because of this I decided to stay in Vermont working at Fletcher Allen as a nurse and living in Waterbury Center. I am able to stay connected with UVM and Burlington because of my sorority affiliation, for me the house at 143 South Willard will always feel like my home in Burlington. It would be a devastating loss to me if the house was no longer a Tri Delta house and I lost the place that made Vermont first feel like home.

Although I understand this proposal has passed the senate, I would like to urge the committee to understand the adverse affect this tax would have on the fraternity and sorority community, thus negatively impacting the UVM, Burlington and greater Vermont community. I appreciate having had the opportunity to attend the committee meeting this past Wednesday, and your willingness to listen. I hope you will find it in the best interest of UVM, Burlington and the state to not repeal the tax exemption status for fraternities and sororities.

Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoint on this matter. I believe it is an important issue, and would like to see the legislation be amended to keep tax exemption for fraternity and sorority housing in Vermont to preserve the rich history of these facilities and to ensure our organizations can keep giving back to the community.

Loyally,

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