



**VBSR Testimony to House Natural Resources and Energy
H. 823 - An act relating to encouraging growth in designated
centers and protecting natural resources**

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Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility is a statewide business association with over 1000 members--large and small from a variety of business types. Our members generate \$4 billion in revenue annually and employ 15% of the state's workforce.

We are here today to offer support for H.823 and to ask the committee to keep some basic principles in mind as they consider changes to this bill.

VBSR businesses want to see more affordable housing available for their employees AND they want to make sure appropriate environmental safeguards are maintained in the process. VBSR and our members have long supported financial and regulatory incentives to create vibrant downtowns and to concentrate development in downtowns and designated growth centers.

We recently completed a survey of our members and the feedback we received is may be helpful as you continue your work on this bill.

When we asked businesses what they viewed as the greatest obstacles to the success of their businesses, the availability of affordable housing was reported to be the second greatest obstacle of all the choices listed. The only greater obstacle cited was the cost of health care.

When we asked these same businesses what was the greatest contributor to the success of their businesses, they reported it was the Vermont quality of life and the Vermont brand. 90% of the respondents also reported that they are concerned that declining water quality in Lake Champlain and other Vermont waterways impacts the quality of life for them or their employees.

Good business people who care about the environment want you to take action to ensure availability of affordable housing for themselves and their employees and they do not want to compromise our environment and rural landscape to do so.

This bill is absolutely on point and we support efforts that incent development in our downtowns. We hope that the technical experts can work through the details so that we can make some meaningful progress on these critical needs so we can ensure vibrant and sustainable communities in Vermont.

(see over)

What do you see as the greatest obstacle(s) to the success of your Vermont business? Rate on scale from 1-5, with "1" meaning "not an obstacle" and "5" meaning "a major obstacle"

