

April 15, 2014

To the Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Jo-Ann Roberts and I am a Director of the Alumnae Corporation of Alpha Iota Chapter of Alpha Chi Omega and also the Alumnae Chapter House Corporation President.

Alpha Chi Omega's property is located at 384 Main Street in Burlington. Built in the mid- 1880's, Alpha Chi Omega is proud to be the third owner of the property. Alpha Chi Omega Alumnae purchased the House in 1930 for the sole purpose of providing student housing to our members for educational purposes . The House was entered on the National Registrar of Historic Places in May 1982.

The Alumnae Corporation celebrated our 90 Year Anniversary of our Charter affiliation with the University of Vermont in 2011.

The Alumnae Corporation receives revenue from one lease with its affiliate undergraduate Chapter comprised of full-time University of Vermont students. Every cent of revenue from that lease is expensed toward annual care and maintenance and improvements to the facility for the students. The majority of improvements over the last five years have been completed to comply with local and State fire and safety ordinances. In addition, the Alumnae Chapter fund raises for special improvement projects. Deferred maintenance is funded by donations and, over time, in a reserve account.

The Burlington City Grand List assesses our property for \$1,217,500 based on our own insurance company property valuation. To this end, based on Burlington's non-residential property tax rate we would pay approximately \$18,799 in annual taxes for the property. An added expense of \$18,799 per year would put us in a very difficult financial position. It would require us to increase our lease with the Chapter, making it necessary for the undergraduate Chapter to pass the cost on to its 20 students. The cost would exceed any residential housing fees that the University of Vermont would charge its student population, and our Chapter would not likely remain solvent over the next few years. We would most likely sell the property to UVM or another tax exempt educational institution.

I would also like to comment on our undergraduate members. They are a sisterhood of strong women that have connected with our Community due in part to our national philanthropy – Domestic Violence Awareness. The Chapter has volunteered annually to fundraise for Hope Works (hopeworksvt.org) and the Laura Winterbottom Memorial Fund. In addition the Chapter is very active in Relay for Life as part of a global fight against cancer, raising record high donations together with other Greek Chapters at UVM.

As part of the Greek community and as a Vermont property owner for over 30 years, I ask that the committee repeal S.221 to remove the property tax exemption for college fraternities and societies.

Respectfully,

Jo-Ann M. Roberts, President

Alpha Chi Omega House Corporation