

On behalf of my colleagues in the RDC's of Vermont, I want to thank you for the opportunity to come in again to speak about H.736.

And while I realize it's the natural product of the legislative process, I want to acknowledge our appreciation for the work that's gone into this bill from the committee, which is reflected in the evolution from the first draft, we saw a few months ago through to the latest incarnation.

I testified before this committee on the RDC's support of this bill several weeks ago and I'm here to echo that today and, again, share our thanks. While we know the dance is far from over, it's important to acknowledge the effort that is put in every day in this building and to know that it's appreciated.

I won't go through the bill section by section, but I want to reiterate our support for H.736. The language about the one-stop shop is useful and we, as RDC's, hope to continue our role as the one-stop shop in our regions and work to continue to strengthen our performance and ensure consistency in service delivery across the state.

The section on the expansion of downtown tax credits to encourage the development of technology-based businesses and infrastructure is something that we strongly support and is somewhat timely in our region. We have a tire-kicker prospect that is looking at a building that used to serve as the home of a fraternal organization. It's a large fixer-upper and the organization is down to a handful of elderly members who want to see the property end up in good hands. Unfortunately, while the building has "good bones", to say it hasn't kept up with the times is an understatement. But there are large, visually arresting, spaces and our prospect has designs on doing something along the lines of co-location or small-batch technology space. This could be an ideal candidate for the type of credits that are envisioned within this bill and be a tangible example of a downtown development project that hits all of the right buttons.

When I was here earlier, I spoke about our support of the proposed entrepreneurial lending program and the "domestic export program" and would like to reiterate that today. These are example of additional, and useful, tools that would be welcome additions to the toolkit that helps us as economic developers service folks in our regions to grow their businesses. A specific piece of the lending section touches on something I believe would be very useful – the proposed loan availability for "growth stage" companies. I have seen where that's an area that's underserved and vulnerable.

I testified in Sen. Mullen's committee in support of similar language to that in this bill that envisions a close look at the need for competitive electrical rates for our state's manufacturers. I deal with manufacturers on a daily basis and I know how important this issue is for them. The bill appears to offer a reasonable opportunity

for research and discussion about how to ensure their continued viability in this part of the country.

Again, thank to the members of the committee for their efforts on H.736 and on all of the work to date this session. As always I thank you for the opportunity to provide input from the RDC's of Vermont and we appreciate your continued service.

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