



Testimony on S.138 – Vermont Brand

House Commerce and Economic Development Committee

April 21, 2014

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I represent the Vermont Technology Alliance, a business association with approximately 200 members, ranging from individual entrepreneurs to large businesses. The vtTA's mission is to support, promote and grow technology businesses and technology jobs in Vermont.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the economic development legislation, in particular the proposal for the development of a new marketing approach for Vermont – referred to as “Vermont: Innovative by Nature.”

The Vermont Technology Alliance supports this initiative as a positive way to promote new businesses, new employees and increased business activity in Vermont – including Vermont's technology business sector.

The VtTA is focused on increasing awareness of Vermont's technology business sector, helping businesses that are here to collaborate and succeed, and on attracting new tech businesses and tech employees to the state.

Our members regularly tell us that Vermont brand and marketing messages that include technology is a top need. They believe that an expansion of how we define and promote Vermont would help them win customers and attract talent to fill jobs.

The image of Vermont as a rural, agricultural and tourist state has served us well and represent some of the unique attributes of living here that so many of us value.

However, it also can create a misperception that Vermont is not a place for tech businesses or tech jobs – that tech is not something we *do* in Vermont.

In particular, tech businesses say Vermont's image makes it difficult to attract the employees they need to fill the open jobs they have. Our members alone have identified hundreds of good job openings they need to fill.

In reality, In Vermont you can be a tech entrepreneur or have a great tech career *and* experience a great quality of life.

Our small state has also become a place where entrepreneurs can succeed; where innovators can innovate; where you can start small and grow. And we have great examples to prove it.

Unfortunately, there often is a disconnection between that reality and the how many outsiders – and even some Vermonters – view our state and our economy.

This issue was identified in the state’s comprehensive economic development strategy, which cited the need to update the brand to: “reflect both the bucolic, rural image of historic Vermont and the vibrant, innovative culture and technology that is part of our new economy, particularly in cities such as Burlington.”

We need to broaden Vermont’s brand and marketing message to include an economic message that highlights our tech and innovation economy to attract employees and businesses to the state. And while Chittenden County is Vermont’s tech hot spot, there are innovative businesses and opportunities throughout the state.

This idea is to evolve our brand to tell the *whole* story – Vermont is more than a great place to visit with beautiful mountains and pristine pastureland. It also is a place to find a job, start or invest in a business; and a place where you can succeed and prosper.

That’s why we support the inclusion of this marketing program in the economic development bill.

Thank you.