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March 18, 2016

RE: H-565

Dear Senator Mullin and Committee Members,

I am writing to respectfully ask that you reject Bill H-565. The following are a few of my reasons.

- When Bill H-565 passed the House of Representatives, it was only represented by <sup>1/2</sup> of the voices. Communications between Representative Lucke and this group wishing to change the law has been going on since December 2015. The remaining voices she represents, as OUR representative, were only contacted Saturday, March 12, 2016 at 8:01PM. Representative Lucke has been elected to represent ALL people in her district. Now that Representative Lucke has contacted us, we are grateful. Unfortunately, I am unable to change commitments and am unable to attend in person. I request this letter be read into the record.
- This law does not just impact the future of the United Methodist Church in White River Jct. but it will impact Methodist congregations, iconic churches, and visions statewide.
- The current law of a two-thirds vote provides a system of checks and balances. Had this law not been in place, our "structurally sound" iconic church would not still be standing. The historic landscape of downtown White River Jct. would have forever been changed. I believe this law helps protect historic buildings statewide and help maintain what Vermont is known for.
- It is my request that you change the wording of this law to include ALL religious denominations requiring a two-thirds vote on such a major and permanent decision.

- Brigid Farrell, District Superintendent for Vermont District of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church stated in her email to Representatives Gabrielle Lucke, Evie Doyon, and cc'd to Ron Wild "Could long time members who have not been involved in the life of the church for years come and vote against a plan that those who are currently attending, supporting, and working for the church to downsize to meet their needs show up to vote thus preventing a two —thirds majority vote?" My first question is how does she know how the members voted since it was by secret ballot and secondly, members serve their church in many different ways.
- The Book of Discipline was established after the law was written. Shouldn't the Book comply with the laws of the State of Vermont?

In closing, I would like to remind you that laws/policies are put in place to protect the most vulnerable population. Rather than questioning why this law was put in place with the Methodist, why shouldn't it be applied to all denominations?

I respectfully request that you reject H-545 as written. Such an important decision should not be made by possibly one vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail L Wright

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