

February 8, 2016

The Honorable Claire Ayer  
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Health and Welfare  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: S.75, An act relating to food and lodging establishments

Dear Senator Ayer and Members of the Committee,

Please consider this as official testimony regarding bill S.75 currently before the Senate Health and Welfare Committee. Per testimony from the Department of Health we understand that this proposal will allow for efficiencies by giving the Commissioner of the Department of Health rule-making power to regulate health standards for food and lodging facilities which currently resides with the voluntary members of the Board of Health.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce recommends that the Committee remove language addressing employees on page 6, sections a/b, lines 2-14, so as to not cause conflict with current paid sick leave mandate being considered by the Senate. If it is the Committee's will to include this language in the bill, addressing the following questions will provide clarity to food and lodging establishments:

1. If an employee is deemed unfit to work for an extended period of time, what benefits will the employer be responsible for providing;
2. How will the requirements of this language either conform or conflict with the pending paid sick leave mandate;
3. If an employee is unable to work for a significant period of time to the detriment of the food or lodging establishment, and the employee is let go, what liability exposure is created for the employer; and
4. Who will be responsible for paying expenses related to medical testing or examination ordered by the Commissioner.

Additionally, the fee changes currently include in the proposal do not reflect the amounts passed in last year's Fee Bill. The Vermont Chamber appreciates the work done last year to bring restaurant and lodging fee increases closer to the rate of economic growth and inflation and requests no further increases occur at this time.

Thank you for seeking the Vermont Chamber's input and we look forward to continuing to work with you on S.75.

Sincerely,

Tori Ossola  
Vice President of Tourism  
Vermont Chamber of Commerce