

Dear Representative Grad,

I am the production manager for a prominent employer of over 100 people in Burlington, Vermont that has been a solid contributor to the community for over 93 years. We are very concerned about the broad language used in S.197 and the potential impacts this bill will have on Vermont companies and employees.

Our company is committed to the air and water quality in the environment we live in; we are also mindful of the efforts and costs associated with our responsibility to mitigate and wherever technically possible, to eliminate environmental, health and safety risks. We have created innovative methods to achieve these goals to reduce our use of toxic substances in manufacturing operations. We have created successful relationships with government agencies and are in excellent standing in all regulations we are obligated to work under. These partnerships we have created with federal, state, regional and municipal agencies are vital in achieving our mutual goals to safely operate within our community and we take them seriously.

While we are committed to upholding our responsibilities as a manufacturer under existing environmental regulations, the broad and overreaching language in this bill gives us grave concern that the State of Vermont is willing to disregard current permitted and environmentally conscientious processors of toxic substances and subject them to "strictly liable" tort law. This bill as written would pose undue responsibilities and liabilities on our company, as if we had been operating without a permit and with unregulated and unknown, emerging toxic substances. To equate legally operated, permitted businesses with illegally operated, non-permitted emitters of toxic substances is unfair. This proposed bill presents the promise of escalating liability insurance costs due to actuaries unable to assess broad, speculative and emerging risks regarding personal injury, medical monitoring and property value damages that require little or no evidence of cause.

No other state has engaged in this type of tort law and for good reason. This method of short circuiting the legal tort process creates a powerful legal weapon to be used against local Vermont manufacturers by bypassing the current set of strict air and water quality laws already on the books and conflating them with tort law.

While tort reform should be a priority, there must be better ways of doing so without disregarding and contradicting other important laws on the books that the vast majority of Vermont manufacturers take seriously and hold in high regard. Please vote **NO** on bill S.197.

Sincerely,

Bryan Lund
Production Manager
Edlund Co.