

Testimony to Vermont House Commerce Committee on on S.162

By Justin Worthley, Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Burton Corporation

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I am Justin Worthley, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at Burton based in Burlington Vermont

I am also a member of two boards that have been involved in issues around workforce development in Vermont – the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation, and the newly formed Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance. And I've been at this awhile. I have been working in Vermont in Operations and Human Resources roles since 1994 at companies including Ben & Jerry's, Rhino Foods, and Bosch before coming to Burton in 2011.

To give you some context about Burton, we have over 1,000 global employees in Europe, Japan, China, Australia, Korea, plus the US and Canada. Our global headquarters is in Burlington along with 2 retail stores. We have over 400 employees in Vermont and that number is growing as we are rapidly expanding our direct to consumer business. Burton is also a net workforce importer into Vermont. We do this because it's been impossible to fill certain jobs from the Vermont workforce. Over the past 3 years, we have relocated over 25 employees to Vermont, often at a hefty pricetag that includes relocation packages. I guess this is one thing this committee should really consider, Burton, and many employers are currently funding our own version of stay-to-stay through our recruiting and relocation efforts. And often these employees come to Vermont and end up staying long-term, usually continuing to work for us, and sometimes moving to jobs at other Vermont companies. As we all know, Vermont's a pretty nice place to live, especially for families and especially for people who are active outdoors. Once they arrive, most don't want to leave. That's the magic of this bill. Get them here and most will stay.

And speaking from Burton's perspective, we can't do this alone – and employers that are much smaller than Burton can't do this at all. We need help from the state, and we believe the programs in S.162 are solid and have great potential. These programs are helping spread the word that VT is indeed open for business and looking for talented people to move here. It's our opinion that these programs have done more to elevate Vermont's employment brand than anything else in recent memory.

These programs are getting scrutiny because of the expensive, but we think that more than an expense, these programs are absolutely an investment that will provide a return. These programs are also new and creative solutions to workforce challenges that have been ongoing for decades and are only getting more challenging. I applaud the many many people who are working hard on workforce development programs in the state (I count myself as one of them), and many of these efforts are focused on workforce development or skill building – and that's needed but it's also very challenging and very expensive. We can't and shouldn't stop those efforts. But the programs in S.162 may provide a greater benefit in a shorter period of time by simply focusing on getting more employed people who like Vermont to move to Vermont. Then once they are here, they will become part of our workforce and be able to tap into opportunities at employers throughout the state like Burton.

Vermont is a pretty awesome place. It's a big part of our brand at Burton. People who come here to visit us from all over the world are blown away by the great culture and lifestyle that exists at our company, and in Vermont. They often asking about jobs, and if we don't have jobs that are a fit for them, we're telling them about things like Stay-to-Stay and encouraging people who have jobs that can be done from

anywhere to consider making the move to Vermont. So from Burton, we urge you to pass this bill and give this workforce development initiative the boost it needs to spread the word... to come work and live in Vermont.

Respectfully submitted by Justin Worthley, [justinw@burton.com](mailto:justinw@burton.com), 802-651-0499