



Feb. 27, 2019

Dear Matt,

I write to thank you, as well as your colleagues serving on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, for taking the time on Monday to hear testimony from the public regarding Governor Scott's budget proposal. I am grateful for your service to the people of Vermont.

I attended the public meeting as representative of the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (WHPA), a land conservation organization located in Windham County, specifically to address the major cut and resulting permanent reallocation away from VHCB-backed investments. As several people had spoken to the same issue before I was called upon, I kept my comments very brief so others at the meeting would have the time to address their concerns to your panel.

VHCB funding enables community-driven housing and conservation organizations to accomplish amazing results statewide. In particular, VHCB has partnered with WHPA in the purchase and conservation of over 2,000 acres of lands along the Windmill Hill Ridge, and beyond that ridgeline, since the organization was formed 25 years ago. That land supports 26 miles of publicly accessible trails for all sorts of outdoor recreation, outdoor education opportunities for local school children, a pristine watershed, unfragmented forest blocks (both mature and successional) that are essential for wildlife, and the resources essential for offsetting the effects of climate change, including flood mitigation and carbon sequestration. The total conserved land value currently owned by WHPA is \$2,377,261. VHCB over the years has awarded grants that cover roughly half the funds needed to purchase and conserve those WHPA land acquisitions, consequently doubling the return on the VHCB funds invested.

Land conservation has also proved to boost rural community economies, bring new farmers to the business of farming, protect farms, and assure they are affordable for future generations.

The essential work VHCB does for our state speaks directly to values that Vermonters share; caring and compassion for our neighbors, and a deep love and appreciation for the natural world. The Governor's proposed reductions would severely compromise the valuable services VHCB provides now, and into the future.

Therefore, I would urge the Appropriations Committees to restore the full amount that is allocated to VHCB by state statute – 50% of the Property Transfer Tax – which equals approximately \$21.8 M.

Respectfully yours,

Sarah Waldo, Vice Chair
Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

