



H.492

House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs

Charles Martin, Government Affairs Director

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The Vermont Chamber of Commerce represents thousands of member businesses from all industries and sectors of Vermont's business community. Informed by routine engagement with our diverse membership, we maintain a knowledgeable perspective on issues impacting Vermont's economy. Our fundamental mission is to help our members grow their businesses *and* the Vermont economy.

We recognize the ongoing need to care for Vermont's homeless population, and we applaud the Committee for its past and present work to improve the circumstances of homeless Vermonters. While we support the intent of the bill, which is to mitigate discrimination of people without homes and reduce the adverse effects of homelessness on individuals and communities, we have serious concerns about sections that would create circumstances which limit the ability of owners of privately owned and maintained spaces to legally manage their properties.

Page four, line fourteen defines shopping malls as public spaces. This inclusion, coupled with sections that enable solicitation in public spaces, essentially provides individuals the ability to solicit money within the confines of a privately owned business establishment, without fear of removal for doing so. Members of this Committee have stated that their intent in advancing this bill is not to permit actions that would hinder business operations, but preventing a private property owner from responding to persons who are affectively using another person's business establishment for their own monetary benefit would do just that.

To mitigate this concern, we would ask the Committee to strike portions of the bill that define shopping malls as public spaces.