

My name is Ann Golob and I am the Vice Chair of the Selectboard for the Town of Newfane and I am a town representative to the Windham Regional Commission. I am testifying today in strong support of significantly increasing the budget of the state's regional commissions.

Newfane is a small town with few paid positions and no professional planners or project managers. We run on a shoe-string with the overwhelming majority of our budget slated for road maintenance and upgrades. We have few commercial spaces and no industry or farms. Any increase in our taxes is strongly opposed by our residents.

Yet as a town – similar to our state and our country we have serious issues to address – adapting to climate change is perhaps the largest. But other issues loom large as well – we desperately need more housing; many young people are leaving Newfane because they can't find rentals or homes to purchase in their price range. We have no sewers in our town so we are held back from building more densely.

When the ARPA funds became available, our Planning Commission surveyed Newfane residents and there was strong support for more housing, investigating water treatment solutions, improving public transportation. How does a small town with small amounts of available revenue begin to find the grants, the analysts with the expert knowledge we need, or someone to help us oversee the project? For us, the best solution is to turn to our regional planning organization, Windham Regional Commission. Their support for Newfane has been superb. We rely on their knowledge, their experience, their recommendations. Let me say this as clearly as I can – a small town like Newfane CANNOT begin to do our part in addressing the problems that the state has committed to solving without the help of the Regional Commission.

The Commissions throughout the state have been relying on level funding for 20 years. If the state is serious about addressing climate change, housing, water treatment – and I strongly believe you are – then one way to demonstrate that commitment is to significantly increase the funding to the Regional Commissions so they can expand the support they provide to our small towns throughout the state.

Thank you.