



February 25, 2021

Senator Michael Sirotkin, Chair
Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
State House
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Chair Sirotkin and Members of the Committee:

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce is a statewide organization that represents 1200 members with half of our membership in the tourism industry and 90% of our members are small businesses with less than 50 employees. We maintain an informed perspective through routine engagement with our members and partner organizations such as the American Hotel and Lodging Association.

We are supportive of the creation of a statewide short-term rental (STR) registry as outlined in S.79. The Legislature has taken progressive actions (most recently Act 10 in 2018) to regulate the STR market in Vermont, and we see a rental registry as the next step in the progression. Removing the anonymity STRs currently operate under is an important step to ensure a safe rental environment.

While STRs contribute positively to Vermont's economy, they operate in a relatively unregulated environment. The pandemic has put a fine point on what can happen during a public health crisis when unlicensed properties providing overnight accommodations remain anonymous and state officials do not have the means to contact them. Registration would be a necessary first step to improve communications and would also provide data if the State chose to enforce health and safety regulations in the future.

The Vermont Chamber has supported the rights of property owners to occasionally rent their homes to earn extra income for up to two weeks without regulations. However, we are now seeing large numbers of STRs that are not occasional renters but unlicensed and unregulated property owners running small to medium sized lodging businesses. With anonymity, STRs are afforded an unfair and significant competitive advantage over licensed properties by having no oversight.

We appreciate the continued dialogue and efforts to pursue safe overnight accommodations for the traveling public by creating equity between licensed and unlicensed properties. Please do not hesitate to reach out via email at aspear@vtchamber.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

Amy Spear
Vice President of Tourism