

Dear Senator White, Chair, and Members, Senate Committee on Government Operations,

I look forward to addressing the provisions of H.135 this afternoon. In preparation for the hearing, I once again reviewed H.135. I learned yesterday from Representative John Gannon that the provision permitting the Commission to hire an administrative assistant was stripped from the bill at the last minute by the House Appropriations Committee. This afternoon I will ask that that a similar provision be restored to the bill.

You may recall that when I appeared before your committee in January, I outlined all the administrative tasks I must handle in addition to doing the core work for the Commission. I attach Appendix E from our Annual Report which lists *some* of the Executive Director Duties. Our full report is here: <https://ethicscommission.vermont.gov/reports> .

The deleted section from H.135 had added a new subsection (3) to § 1221(c). It read: “(3) With the consent of the Commission, the Executive Director may employ persons necessary for the efficient administration of the Commission.” Representative Gannon explained to me that the House Appropriations Committee felt that the language was “too vague, and that the decision could be put off since additional staff was tied to the passage of a Code of Ethics.” May I suggest different language: “(c) The Executive Director is authorized to employ a ½ time administrative assistant.” A Code of Ethics will not be passed this year. Without additional staff time my position will not be sustainable. I should add that we have money in our reserve fund which can cover the position for the up-coming fiscal year. And, as I told you in January, our current budget for 2022 is \$113,000. In response to a February 25, 2021 request (attached) from the Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Finance and Management, outlining expected American Revenue Rescue Plan dollars for Vermont, we submitted a request for funding for the position we are seeking (attached). When I wrote the request on March 4, I was unaware that H.135 had been stripped of our request for staff support.

H.135 contains many necessary amendments which were presented in last year’s H.634 including our request for additional staffing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Larry Novins

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