



115 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT 05633-5201

THOMAS I. CHITTENDEN
VERMONT STATE SENATOR

PHONE: (802) 233-1913
TCHITTENDEN@STATE.VT.US



January 10th 2022

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Government Operations Committee,

This testimony is in support of an amendment to H. 454 to assign one of the proposed Burlington International Airport commission seats to the Town of Williston.

The Burlington International Airport, located entirely in the City of South Burlington with flight paths directly impacting the town of Williston and the City of Winooski, is a critical part of our Vermont economy and transportation infrastructure. The airspace used by this publicly funded asset is not owned by any single municipality and thusly the communities most affected by the use of this airspace deserve a voice in its oversight on the advisory airport commission.

The Burlington voters overwhelmingly supported the H 454 charter change language to add seats to the advisory commission governing the Burlington International Airport. Adding the City of Winooski to the commission with the City of South Burlington and the City of Burlington is a great step forward in improving the decision making over this public asset. It would be further improved by assigning the additional seat to the other municipality most directly affected by airport operations – the Town of Williston.

The current airport commission has five seats; four appointed by the City of Burlington and one appointed by the City of South Burlington. With this amendment, the commission would have seven seats; four appointed by the City of Burlington, one by the City of South Burlington, one by the City of Winooski and one by the Town of Williston. Including another municipality will improve airport decision making to be more considerate and responsive to the public interests of this transportation infrastructure.

Governance of this airport has been a recurring topic over the last four decades with gradual efforts reforming the oversight of this entirely state and federally funded public asset. In 1985, Governor Kunin charged a 'Burlington Airport Study Group'¹ which resulted in the creation of the Airport Enterprise Fund to separate the financial activities of the airport from the City of Burlington. More recently in 2013 an Airport Strategic Planning Committee² recommended to the Burlington City Council that BIA "concurrently work with the State and other potential regional partners to explore a regional authority model to be implemented..." H.454 evidences the continued need to assess and adjust the governance of the Burlington International Airport to represent the public interest. Having another municipality affected by the use of our county airspace on the advisory commission would better inform the Director of Aviation of the regional priorities for grant applications, managerial focus and consideration of the public interest.

I respectfully ask the Senate Government Operations Committee to amend H.454 to assign one of the two newly proposed Airport Commission seats to the Town of Williston – or to be appointed by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (as recommended by the 1985 legislative Airport Study group).

Sincerely,

Thomas Chittenden
State Senator
Chittenden County Senate District
m. 802.233.1913

¹ Chaired by Susan C. Crampton, Thomas M. Crowley and David A. Kaufman.

² BIA Airport Strategic Planning Committee Members: Karen Paul (Co Chair, Burlington City Council), Paul Sisson (Co-Chair, City of Burlington), Joseph McNeil (Secretary, Partner at McNeil, Leddy & Sheahan, PC), Ed Colodny (Former CEO, US Airways), Louise Stoll PhD (Former Assistant Secretary & CFO US Department of Transportation), Ann Beland (General Manager, JetBlue Airways), Ernie Pomerleau (President & CEO, Pomerleau Real Estate), Jeff Schulman (Airport Commissioner), Jane Knodell (Burlington City Council), Michael O'Brien (Mayor, City of Winooski), Vince Dober (Burlington City Council), Pam Mackenzie (South Burlington City Council)