



April 24, 2023

Amy Sheldon, Chair House Environment and Energy Committee
State House
115 State St.
Montpelier VT 05633-5301

Dear Chair Sheldon and Members of the House Environment and Energy Committee:

We have closely followed S. 100 as the bill has progressed through the State House and as we have testified and written to your committee, we strongly urge you to include the amendments from the Rural Caucus that are in your committee.

We support the inclusion of a new Rural Recovery Coordination Council in S. 100. As conceived, the Council would study and make recommendations on how to strengthen coordination between agencies and stakeholders in rural economic development. We understand that a similarly conceived study that was in S. 94 as it was voted out of House Ways and Means, was stripped from the bill by the House Appropriations Committee, leaving the Rural Recovery Coordination Council in S. 100 as the only viable mechanism for a comprehensive and necessary assessment of tools available for rural economic growth.

Establishment of such a council would build on the excellent work this legislature did in committing \$3 million to the Agency of Administration Municipal Technical Assistance Program, which is a one-time appropriation intended to assist those communities with a high need for state and federal grants but lower capacity for accessing and applying for those sources.

The Rural Recovery Council would identify structural changes to support rural community development, including a permanent structure for ensuring such programming within state government, and recommending changes to engage rural voices in regional collaboration and prioritization projects; and recommending how municipal, regional, and State plans, policies, and investments can be integrated and mutually supportive; where to establish an office of Rural Community Development; and how to support capacity and multi-town coordination and collaboration.

We urge you to add the Rural Caucus amendments, including the Rural Recovery Council in the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen B. Horn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Director, Public Policy & Advocacy