



AARP Vermont Testimony on H.629 **Charlie Gliserman, Advocacy Director, AARP Vermont**

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My name is Charlie Gliserman, Advocacy Director with AARP Vermont. On behalf of AARP Vermont's 112,000 members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the changes to property tax abatement and tax sale laws outlined in H.629.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50+ to choose how they live as they age. In doing so, we support policies that enable Americans to live in financial security and dignity in retirement.

The property tax is the most burdensome tax for many individuals with low and fixed incomes. The tax is imposed on an illiquid, indivisible asset. Long-term homeowners have little control over their current tax liabilities, as they are determined by decades of unforeseeable market dynamics. As a result, many people have difficulty coming up with the money to pay the tax.

At the same time, Vermonters are at risk of losing stable housing and equity they have built up in their property over small amounts of tax debt. For some, this equity represents their entire life savings.

AARP supports a variety of property tax relief measures to address this challenge. These measures should be equitable, cost-effective, and targeted to homeowners with low and moderate incomes. They should also be well-publicized and easy to participate in. H.629 is well-aligned with these criteria.

In addition, I am pleased to share information about AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide Program, the largest free, volunteer-based tax assistance program in the United States. AARP Vermont's Tax-Aide program is entirely volunteer-run and operated, with a focus on taxpayers 50+ or with low to moderate incomes. We have 213 Tax-Aide volunteers who helped over 5,100 Vermonters file federal and state tax returns in 2022.

In 2019, AARP Foundation expanded its efforts with Property Tax-Aide, a free resource to help homeowners and renters more easily apply for property tax relief. Since then, Property Tax-Aide has served over 40,000 people nationally with an estimated benefit of \$10 million in property tax relief.¹

Property Tax-Aide was founded because few people know about their state's property tax relief programs, and those who do, often struggle to get through the application process. Nationwide, AARP Foundation estimates that only 8 percent of eligible older adults with limited incomes apply.²

Protecting the home as an asset is critical to older Vermonters' ability to age with financial security and in their own homes and communities, which Vermonters overwhelmingly support. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to on this important issue today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Get Help Applying for a Property Tax Credit or Refund, AARP Foundation, 2023.

² Property Taxes 101, AARP Foundation Property Tax-Aide, 2019.