

Tim Arsenault, VMCTA Legislative Committee
Testimony to House Ways and Means
January 10, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss h 629 with you. Vermont's Town Clerks and Treasurers are at the boots on the ground with taxpayers in our communities, in fact, one of my town's three annual property tax payments is due tomorrow.

None of us want to see anyone lose their home. To that end, my town works with taxpayers on payment plans in the event they fall behind. But, let's be clear, The property tax is the main source of revenue for our towns.

I've chaired our town's board of civil authority and board of abatement for nearly 15 years. The reasons for abatement are laid out in statute, but I'm concerned about how far we should go in documenting inability to pay, as it in some cases could violate someone's right to privacy on medical issues.

We are concerned about extending the notice of service to abutters, as we already publicly warn our meetings, and wonder who would bear the cost of personally noticing people (p7)

We also are concerned with a five year, instead of the current one year old on properties sold at tax sale, as it puts properties in limbo at a time when Vermont badly needs additional housing

The bill also minimizes any incentive for people to purchase a property at tax sale, and it would mean that the town would end up holding the property, again, for an inordinate amount of time.

I would also point to the recent boon in property sales to point out that grand list value is not necessarily equal to a home's value, as during the height of covid many homes in our town were purchased at 50 to 100 thousand dollars above their grand list value

Again, our association does not want to see anyone lose their home, but we also need to maintain the integrity of our main revenue source. We'd be happy to work with you to make a good bill even better.