

**Vermont Municipal Clerks & Treasurers Association (VMCTA)
Legislative Committee**

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Thank you for offering us the opportunity to provide comments on S.159, which proposes to create a County Governance Study Committee, and for inviting VMCTA to have a seat on the committee.

The bill says the committee will examine “how to best strengthen county-level government...to enhance and optimize public safety, tax collection, and resource allocation”, but it begs the question of “what problem are we trying to address?”

The idea of the committee seems to draw a forgone conclusion that county government is the right way to go rather than opening up the exploration to a broader review of governmental structure and services, and public needs. A better approach might be to review what services are offered on the local, county and state levels, and talk about what opportunities, barriers, or concerns there are around consolidation or realignment.

It would also be important to reflect on representation and accountability. Local and state officials are elected and accountable to their constituents, but Vermont’s current county-level representation is limited. Any sort of consolidation on the county level would require implementing a much more robust level of elected officials and governmental structure; and the committee’s explorations shouldn’t be limited to just looking at things through a county governance lens.

VMCTA looks forward to being an active participant in all future explorations on governance models and ways to enhance and optimize services.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or for further discussion.