

Testimony to Senate Government Operations

Re: State Response to Flood Recovery in Barre City, Vermont

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***Positive Aspects of the State's Response:***

**State Responsiveness:**

The State was prompt in addressing major needs, such as ensuring water supply, especially significant since Barre was under a boil water notice during the flood response.

**Effective Communication:**

The communication from the State was frequent and relevant, aiding in timely updates and guidance.

**VEM "Ticket" System:**

The "ticket" system implemented by the Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) for resource and assistance requests largely functioned well, facilitating organized response efforts.

**Agency of Transportation (AOT) Performance:**

AOT's rapid response in clearing landslides and assisting with paving in critical areas like N. Main Street was exemplary and greatly appreciated.

***Areas for Improvement:***

**Failure of the 211 System:**

Directing people to 211 as per State's guidance led to a lack of local data collection. This resulted in operating at a data deficit throughout the response, hindering effective decision-making and resource allocation.

**Issues with Points of Contact:**

The frequent change of individuals assigned to liaise with the City caused confusion and inefficiency. A more stable and consistent point of contact is necessary for effective coordination.

**Need for Specialized Equipment:**

The lack of specialized equipment for debris clearance under bridges was notable. Given the increasing frequency and intensity of storms, there's an urgent need for the City and State to access or own such equipment for rapid deployment.

The Cities of Barre and Montpelier strongly support [H.723](#). This omnibus bill has many benefits to our communities including:

- Tax Relief and Business Grants
- Mitigation and Preparedness Funding
- Establishing best practices for rebuilding homes and mandating flood history disclosure are in line with the call for clearer guidelines and information dissemination.
- Municipal relief to support local governments in maintaining services and recovery efforts
- Expansion of Business Emergency Gap Assistance Program: **(By covering a broader range of business needs such as payroll and administrative needs, the program can more effectively aid in the recovery and continuity of local businesses.)**