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March 1, 2023

Senator Christopher Bray, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

RE: S.100 Housing Bill

Dear Chair Bray and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (the state association for Vermont's regional planning commissions), thank you for your work to address Vermont's housing crisis and protect Vermont's environment. We also appreciate the opportunities you have provided for us to provide testimony on the draft bill.

VAPDA generally supports the bill and any efforts to increase the supply of more housing units. Here are some comments from our perspective based upon S.100 as introduced organized by bill section.

1. Parking - We support efforts that prevent municipalities from requiring more parking than is needed understanding that the property owner can provide more if desired. This is considered a best practice in professional planning.
2. Water and Sewer service – We understand that there are concerns about unique situations with regards to sewer service areas that potentially should not be required to achieve the increased density of four (or five previously) dwelling units per acre. Rather than try to figure out every scenario or ask this to be studied, we suggest adding a new paragraph (15)(A)(ii)(VII) requiring any other potential excluded sewer-served areas to be reviewed and approved by the municipality's regional planning commission and the Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development.
11. Regional Plans and Section 12. Municipal Plans – We support these sections. It will be very helpful to regional planning commissions to have a clear numeric goal or target developed as part of the Statewide Housing Needs Assessment conducted by the Department of Housing and Community Development every five years. Quantifying housing needs and providing targets to regions will assist the RPCs with planning for new housing, allocating resources and measuring impact. It will also allow statewide consistency in our Regional Plans. We have been getting requests for targets or a needs

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analysis from municipalities as they try to address housing needs. RPCs will work with our member municipalities to break out the targets/goals for municipalities to use in developing their municipal plans. This will help municipalities plan for housing growth. We used a similar process working with the Department of Public Service on enhanced regional and municipal energy plans. There was an incentive in the energy planning in that municipalities and RPCs received greater weight in the PUC permitting process when the energy plans were approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Service.

15. Housing Navigators- We support this provision, and RPCs are ready to serve in this role. We understand the suggested appropriation will not cover the full need, but it will still be helpful.
16. Definitions, Priority Housing Projects – We support removing the caps for priority housing projects. This will allow more housing in our designated centers supporting our villages and downtowns.

We suggest adding two more sections to address data collection and monitoring of progress:

- a. Grand List Housing Unit Data - From our limited understanding, while there is a data field in the grand list database system, it is a text field that cannot be tabulated, and it is not a required field. We greatly support the below change in statute that will allow the State, regional planning commissions, and municipalities to track housing production more easily.
32 V.S.A. § 4152
(3) A brief description of each parcel of taxable real estate in the town. "Parcel" means all contiguous land in the same ownership, together with all improvements thereon, including the number of residential units in a field that can be tabulated.
- b. We suggest DHCD use the grand list data to report back to the Legislature on an annual basis the number and location of new housing units. The data and regular reporting are fundamental to understanding what is happening and adjusting policy in the future to achieve State goals.

We also suggest adding a section to eliminate adoption by Australian ballot for municipal plans and bylaws.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,



Charlie Baker
Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
Government Relations Chair

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