

March 13, 2025

Dear esteemed members of the House Agricultural Committee,

My name is Julia Barstow and I'm here to testify in regards to H 291, a bill to tax land at a higher rate in the Current Use Program for being posted. My parents, Rick and Betsy Barstow, and I live on 980 Sodom Pond Rd in East Montpelier. My father, Rick Barstow, purchased this abandoned hill farm with 62 acres in 1972. The land has been in the Current Use Program for decades. Activities include maple sugaring, haying, forestry, responsible logging, milling lumber, cutting firewood and removing invasive plants. We consider ourselves good stewards of this precious land. We recently received the distinction of bird friendly maple from the Audubon Society. Another activity on this land is my mother's preschool. She's a registered Family Childcare Home Provider and an ACT 166 universal Pre-K partner. Her program is a nature-based Spanish language program. The core of the curriculum is exploring the forest and fields. For the safety of the children, we post the land so the children are not at risk from hunters or leg hold traps. Posting our land does not diminish the fact that we are conscientious stewards. We are in opposition to H291 as we do not want to be penalized for caring for the well-being of the children in my mother's pre-k. We feel that other people who are enrolled in the Current Use Program may also have very good reasons for posting their property.

Thank you very much for hearing my testimony.

Respectfully,

Julia Barstow

PS We do allow people to walk on the land. It is just trapping and hunting that are prohibited.