

Dear Chair Clarkson, Chair Marcotte, and members of the Senate Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs and the House Commerce and Economic Development Committees,

The undersigned organizations share deep concern about the framing and structure of this morning's joint data privacy hearing. The witness list for Wednesday's "educational" hearing between House Commerce and Economic Development and Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs includes zero Vermont businesses, nonprofits, healthcare providers, financial institutions, or employers despite the fact that these are the sectors that will bear the real-world compliance costs, operational risks, and economic consequences of any resulting policy.

Advocacy should be transparent. Education should be genuine; it requires balance and an honest examination of tradeoffs.

Everyone has the right to participate in the legislative process, including national organizations and out-of-state experts. What is not appropriate is presenting a coordinated advocacy effort as neutral "education" when it is far from that. This is particularly troubling given recent public claims that Vermont's prior privacy work was partisan or inadequate. The Senate's unanimous passage of comprehensive privacy legislation with language sponsored by both the Senate majority and minority leadership, demonstrates the opposite.

Our organizations have supported comprehensive, strong data privacy protections similar to laws enacted in neighboring states that give Vermonters clear rights over their personal information while preserving a healthy, functioning economy. We supported the balanced, bipartisan data privacy bill that passed the Vermont Senate unanimously last year because it demonstrated that strong consumer protections and economic vitality are not mutually exclusive. It also includes heightened protections for sensitive data such as immigration status and reproductive care.

At a time when Vermont ranks last in economic momentum and Vermonters are calling for focus on affordability, workforce challenges, and opportunity, this kind of misdirection is damaging. It further erodes trust between the Legislature, and the employers and nonprofits Vermont relies on and signals a continued disconnect from economic reality.

Our organizations remain committed to working constructively with legislators to see a comprehensive data privacy law that works for all Vermonters to be enacted. We also understand that the vast majority of legislators want this too. We respectfully request that Vermont-based stakeholders be given at least the same time, access, and opportunity to participate in this process as national advocacy groups.

Sincerely,

Heating Cooling Contractors of Vermont
Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce

Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

Vermont Chamber of Commerce

Vermont Fuel Dealers Association

Vermont Medical Society

Vermont Retail & Grocers Association

Vermont Ski Areas Association

Vermont Technology Alliance

Vermont Transportation Energy Network

Vermont Vehicle and Automotive Distributors Association