

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

**I chose to move to Vermont intentionally and thoughtfully.** My family and I were drawn here by the beauty of the natural landscape, the peace and quiet of rural life, and the sense of solitude that is increasingly rare in the modern world. Vermont represented an escape from constant noise, visual clutter, and industrial intrusion-a place where the natural environment is the centerpiece of, and still defines, daily life.

Our home in Pownal sits in a forested, mountainous setting where scenic views, silence, and privacy are not incidental benefits, but the defining characteristics of the place. These qualities are experienced daily and are central to why we chose to live here.

That character is consistently recognized by others who experience the property as well. We rent our home occasionally on a short-term basis, and it has received only five-star reviews. Without exception, guests describe the same qualities that drew us to Vermont in the first place: extraordinary mountain views, peace and quiet, privacy, and immersion in nature. Visitors repeatedly refer to the home as a “private and peaceful retreat,” a “mountaintop haven,” and “a truly breathtaking and serene escape,” noting the silence, the uninterrupted views, and the sense of having “a mountain to yourself.”

Many reviews specifically emphasize how rare and restorative this setting feels-highlighting the quiet, the absence of visual intrusion, and the experience of sitting in the hot tub or living spaces while looking out over unspoiled mountain views. These observations come from families, couples, and groups visiting from across New England and beyond, and they echo our own daily experience of the property. People are drawn to Vermont for the same reasons they are drawn to our property.

I share this not to promote a rental property, but to make a simple and important point: **the scenic and quiet character of this location is real, tangible, and widely valued.** It is not abstract, exaggerated, or limited to one household’s preferences. It is the defining feature of the place.

**Over the past year (and ongoing), my family and I have been involved in a telecommunications siting case before the Public Utility Commission (PUC) as direct abutters.** I am aware that S.159 proposes to extend the sunset of the PUC’s authority over telecommunications siting, and I feel compelled to share my experience before that authority is extended again.

I support reliable telecommunications infrastructure, particularly for public safety and rural access. However, my experience has shown that the current §248a process places an extraordinary burden on individual residents while offering limited procedural protections or meaningful participation, even where the impacts are highly localized and severe.

Despite statutory language emphasizing aesthetics, mitigation, and municipal deference, the process in practice has been opaque, procedurally uneven, and inaccessible to ordinary citizens without legal representation. The cost has been exorbitant for our family as we have had to use legal representation to navigate the overwhelming process. **The PUC process functions more like specialized litigation than a public permitting process, requiring legal and technical expertise that most residents and municipalities do not have.**

Over the course of the proceeding, we encountered:

- **Late and incomplete notice**, including errors in identifying abutting landowners that went uncorrected until residents themselves discovered them;

- **Repeated changes to the project's height, location, and design**, requiring residents to continually respond without a meaningful reset of procedural rights;
- **An alternative-site process that was nominal rather than substantive**, even where property owners were willing to cooperate and offer less visually adverse locations;
- **Heavy reliance on applicant-driven technical modeling**, with limited opportunity for affected residents to meaningfully test, challenge, or contextualize those materials;
- **A structure that strongly favors applicants and institutional participants**, while abutters are expected to navigate discovery, evidentiary standards, and depositions with little guidance or support.

Although the statute recognizes aesthetics as a legitimate concern, the lived experience of residents-how a project alters daily views, quiet, and sense of place-is too often treated as secondary to modeling and narrative prepared by the applicant.

S.159 includes provisions intended to improve notice, municipal participation, and colocation analysis. Those goals are commendable. Based on my experience, however, I believe additional reforms are necessary if the PUC's authority is to be extended again. In particular, I urge consideration of:

- Stronger, enforceable notice requirements with meaningful consequences when errors occur;
- Clear procedural protections when projects change substantially;
- A more robust and transparent alternative-site and mitigation analysis that does not rely solely on applicant representations;
- Greater support and guidance for municipalities and residents, who often do not understand their role or rights in the process;
- Clear recognition that private residential views and daily lived environments can constitute significant scenic resources deserving of real weight.

I am asking for a system that does not pit neighbors against neighbors (as it has in my personal situation), does not overwhelm individual residents, and does not treat Vermont's defining qualities as collateral damage.

Before extending the PUC's authority again, I respectfully ask that you consider whether the current process truly reflects Vermont's values of stewardship, fairness, and respect for place-or whether it requires meaningful reform. Consider whether or not you value new residents in your state. After only 3 years of owning a home in Vermont, I'm not sure I would recommend to anyone to move to Vermont. This state no longer appears to value its residents, its land, or nature.

Thank you for your time and consideration. (Photo attached for your reference - proposed tower location is at balloon).

Sincerely,  
**Tanya Hart**  
 Pownal, Vermont  
 [Phone: 415-722-2834]