

Vermont Committee
Vermont State House
Montpelier, VT

Dear Vermont Senators and Representatives,

You may not know me personally, but the policies being discussed at the state level directly affect my family, my employees, and the small business we have worked nearly a decade to build.

My husband and I own Pittsford Automotive Center in Pittsford, Vermont. We have been in business for almost ten years. What started as a two-person operation has grown into a shop that now employs six full-time employees, in addition to ourselves. We have built this business through hard work, long hours, and a commitment to serving our community honestly and responsibly.

When I read about the proposal to increase the minimum wage by \$3 per hour, I was deeply concerned about the impact this will have on small businesses like ours. We already pay above minimum wage. However, when entry-level wages rise significantly, it creates wage compression across the entire payroll. In order to retain skilled and experienced employees, we would be forced to increase wages across the board.

Our payroll is already one of our largest expenses. In many months, our employees take home more than we do as owners. We accept that responsibility — that is part of being business owners. But there is a limit to what a small, locally owned shop can absorb. Significant mandated wage increases will force many small businesses to reduce staff, cut hours, raise prices for customers, or close altogether.

If the goal is to make Vermont more affordable, raising minimum wage is not the solution. Increasing labor costs will increase the cost of goods and services across the board, ultimately placing further financial strain on Vermont families.

Health insurance is another major burden. Premiums have risen dramatically over the years, and Vermont's limited insurance competition leaves small businesses with very few options. Without meaningful competition in the market, rates continue to rise. I would love nothing more than to offer my employees high-quality health insurance coverage. However, offering a comprehensive plan at current rates would financially devastate our business. Expanding access to more insurance providers would create competition, stabilize costs, and make coverage more attainable for both employers and employees.

Vermont needs to become more business-friendly. As taxpayers and employers, we need state government to operate with the same fiscal responsibility that small businesses must follow every day. We cannot spend beyond our means. We cannot operate inefficiently. We cannot ignore financial reality. Yet that is how many small business owners feel state policy is being approached.

My family settled in Vermont in the 1800s. My grandfather owned the gas station in town. My father owned a sporting goods store. Today, my husband and I own an automotive repair shop. We want to continue that legacy here. But with each new policy that increases costs and regulatory pressure, we are forced to question whether Vermont is still a sustainable place to build a future.

If you want a true measurement of economic health, look at empty storefronts. Visit downtown Rutland. Count the vacant spaces. Ask why businesses are closing and why families are relocating out of state. The answer is not that Vermonters lack work ethic. It is that the cost of operating and living here continues to rise without meaningful structural relief.

Imagine if Vermont became the most business-friendly state in the Northeast. Imagine if entrepreneurs and established companies chose to relocate here because the tax structure and cost of operation made sense. That is how you create jobs. That is how you grow the tax base. That is how you make Vermont truly affordable.

Vermonters care deeply about our landscape and environment. I certainly do. But policies must balance environmental stewardship with economic sustainability. Our communities cannot thrive if small businesses are steadily pushed out.

I am asking you to reconsider policies that increase financial burdens on the very businesses that employ Vermonters and sustain our local communities. We need leadership that prioritizes affordability, responsible fiscal management, and long-term economic growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meghan Fox and Gordon Fox
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Pittsford, Vermont