

## Testimony in Support of Repealing Act 181

To Members of the Vermont Legislature,

I am submitting this testimony as a Vermont tradesman, landowner, and small business operator who works directly in the built environment—where policy decisions become real costs, real delays, and real consequences for working people.

Act 181 should be repealed.

This law introduces a fundamental shift in land use policy that places new uncertainty, new constraints, and new layers of control over rural landowners, builders, and small businesses—before the mapping and implementation are even complete. It changes the rules midstream in a state that already struggles with affordability, workforce retention, and housing availability.

At its core, Act 181 does three things that are deeply problematic:

1. It creates uncertainty that freezes development.

Before a single shovel hits the ground, projects now face ambiguity tied to future mapping, tier classifications, and evolving rules. Lenders hesitate. Property owners delay. Contractors lose work. In rural Vermont, uncertainty alone is enough to kill projects.

2. It shifts control away from local people to centralized frameworks.

The tiered system and expanded oversight reduce the ability of landowners and local communities to make practical decisions about their own land. Vermont has always relied on local knowledge and common-sense stewardship. Act 181 replaces that with abstract classifications that do not reflect real-world conditions.

3. It makes it harder—not easier—to build housing and sustain rural economies.

Vermont has a housing shortage. We need more homes, not more barriers. We need to support trades, not restrict them. We need to allow families to build on their land, not subject them to unclear and evolving constraints that increase cost and risk.

As someone actively working in plumbing, heating, and construction, I see firsthand how fragile project feasibility already is. Material costs are high. Labor is limited. Financing is tight. Adding another layer of regulatory complexity—especially one that is not fully defined—pushes projects from “possible” to “not worth the risk.”

That means fewer homes built. Fewer jobs. Less economic activity. More young families leaving the state.

Supporters of Act 181 argue that it protects Vermont’s landscape and guides growth. Vermont already has some of the strongest land use protections in the country. The issue is not a lack of regulation—it is overregulation that fails to balance environmental goals with economic reality.

We do not need incremental fixes, delays, or “technical corrections.”

We need to acknowledge that this framework is flawed at a structural level.

Act 181 should be repealed in full.

Replace it, if necessary, with a system that:

Provides clear, stable, and predictable rules

Respects rural landowners and working Vermonters

Encourages housing development across all regions of the state

Supports trades, small businesses, and local economies

Vermont cannot afford policies that make it harder to live, work, and build here.

Respectfully submitted,

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