

The timing of the paid sick leave legislation is unfortunate for Vermont's small businesses who are struggling to simply make ends meet, especially considering the number of mandates the Legislature has imposed on our businesses over the last few years, such as increasing the minimum wage and mandating enrollment in Vermont Health Connect despite the fact that Vermont is the only state in the nation which enacted this for businesses with fewer than 50 employees. These initiatives and mandates have furthered Vermont's reputation as being unfriendly to business.

While I appreciate the concessions made over the last four years, this bill is not perfect. For example, I would have preferred to see the additional exemptions for some small businesses offered by amendment today in the Senate. However, under the leadership of Senator Mullin, the Senate worked in partnership with the business community to address some of their major concerns, and added a number of their key recommendations. The result is a bill that is limited in scope and expands sick leave to many Vermonters who don't have it today. If the bill reaches final passage, it is imperative that these new mandates be clearly and quickly communicated to every single Vermont business so they can understand what is expected of them, rather than find out a year or two down the line that they weren't in compliance and now facing penalties.

What we should be focusing and working on are ways we can grow our economy, be better partners with our business community and make Vermont more affordable for all. These are issues which impact every single Vermonter, and should be our top priority if we want to build a bright future for Vermont.