



To: Senate Natural Resources Committee

Date: March 22, 2109

Re: Weatherization for All

The Vermont Association of Realtors® (VAR) is the largest trade association in Vermont, with more than 1700 REALTOR members and 350 affiliate members. **Our mission is to advocate for our REALTOR members and the rights of property owners.** In 2017, REALTOR transactions translated to \$5.8 Billion or 18% of the gross state product. Each home sold adds approximately \$70K to the local economies of the communities where those homes are located.

REALTORS are experts in their field. In order to attain the distinction of REALTOR, one must meet a level of professionalism through additional professional development that includes adhering to a strict Code of Ethics that sets us apart from real estate agents who do not reach this platinum level standard. I say this to emphasize to you that our members are the best of the best in the real estate industry, and very well respected because of the high level of standards by which they are held to gain the distinction of REALTOR.

I submit this testimony of the topic of "Weatherization for ALL", on behalf of our 1700 plus members, some who have worked in this industry for over 35 years, in both residential and commercial markets.

REALTORS understand the importance of encouraging energy efficiency, and we walk our talk. VAR is part of the National Association of REALTORS (NAR) Federation, who represent 1.3 million members nationwide and whose total contribution to the national economy equates to \$3.372 trillion dollars. We are well supported and trained in best practices, are kept informed of emerging and current legislative and regulatory issues occurring at the federal level, and enjoy access to myriad resources that allow us to stay on top of the latest trends in the real estate industry across the country. It is with this level of knowledge and expertise that I make the following comments and suggestions regarding the issue of "Weatherization for All."

REALTORS have known for some time that a natural tension can and often does exist between promoting a robust economy and the need to address climate change. This is one of the reasons VAR collaborated with the Vermont Green Home Alliance in 2015 to create a bi-annual Green Symposium, with our next one happening in fall of 2019. REALTORS in Vermont support energy efficiency, address climate change and work hard to address the natural tension I mention here. Without any mandates, the Vermont Association of REALTORS worked with Efficiency Vermont to develop a pamphlet



Vermont Association of Realtors®

which highlights programs and resources for homeowners in making their homes more energy efficient.

As experts in this industry, and with access to a nationwide network of other REALTOR professionals, we stay abreast of issues related to our field. We listen and learn what prospective homeowners are looking for in the housing market. We are proactive and responsive in providing the tools and resources for REALTOR members and consumers. REALTORS guide, educate and support people in achieving their dream of homeownership. REALTORS forge trusting relationships with consumers that last beyond their first home purchase.

It is in this vein that I offer the following comments and suggestions to this draft bill.

- We support expanding weatherization programs to prospective homeowners who fall outside the current guidelines and encourage you to include as many homes as possible, regardless of income.
- We support forming two working groups, and respectfully request to be added to the Commercial Working Group, as commercial property is seldom sold without the use of a commercial REALTOR.
- We ask that you postpone mandating anything at this point and allow the Working Groups, made up of experts, to tackle the unresolved issues from the last working groups, the unanswered questions that exist in this current draft, and address any other complex, complicated or controversial issues that make be uncovered during the process.

The two groups will undoubtedly address the natural tension that often exists between protecting our environment and promoting a robust economy. The members you have outlined to be assigned to these groups have the expertise to do this work and can report back to the legislature in January 2020 with solutions that will move Vermont forward in addressing climate change and energy efficiency within the Housing Market, while promoting the economic growth our state so desperately needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen S Hossley, CEO
Vermont Association of Realtors®
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enc: pamphlet

How will your new home use energy?

Home Energy Information



Your home is a system, and understanding how it consumes all types of energy (like electricity, wood, oil or natural gas), can help you determine how energy-efficient it is, and how much your monthly energy bills will be.

On average, **Vermonters spend over \$3,000 on their energy bills** every year, but once you know how your home uses energy, you can tackle projects that will improve its efficiency and reduce your energy burden. These projects have additional benefits like eliminating cold drafts and reducing air-borne allergens like mold, making your home more **affordable, healthy, and comfortable**. Plus, by increasing the efficiency and adding renewable energy systems, you can reduce your carbon footprint, making Vermont a better place for future generations.

The Vermont Home Energy Profile

The Vermont Home Energy Profile is an independent, unbiased assessment that evaluates the expected energy efficiency of a home through three key metrics: estimated annual energy usage, estimated annual costs, and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Home Energy Score.

A DOE Qualified Assessor will produce a Vermont Home Energy Profile by performing a 1-2 hour home walk-through. Your Assessor will recommend upgrades to improve your home's energy efficiency like:

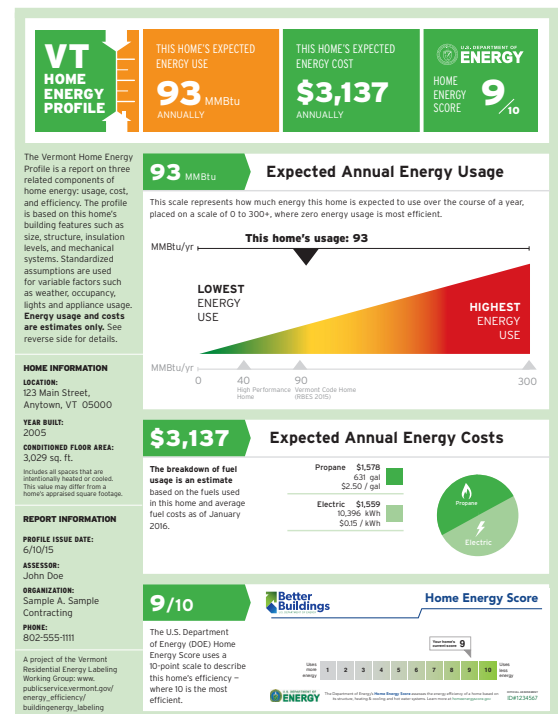
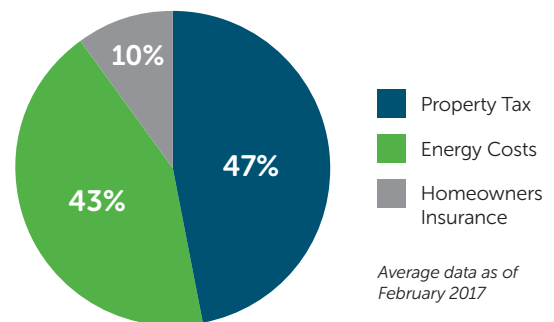
- Air sealing gaps or holes in the ceilings, or walls
- Increasing insulation levels
- Replacing old or inefficient equipment or appliances

These types of improvements can **save you up to 20% on your annual heating bills** – not only this year, but every year going forward – making the investment worth the cost. Efficiency Vermont also offers rebates to complete this work, and there are lenders that provide energy efficiency project financing, so you can **roll the cost of improvements into your mortgage**.

The price of a Vermont Home Energy Profile varies, but is generally \$200 or less. For more information or to find a DOE Qualified Assessor, **call Efficiency Vermont at 888-921-5990 or visit www.efficiencyvermont.com/HomeEnergyProfile**.

Effective 07/01/2017 - Vermont Realtors®

Comparison of Average Annual Costs for a Vermont Home



Efficiency
Vermont

VR-073 Rev. A

Energy Upgrades In Your New Home

The first few years of living in your home are a great time to invest in energy efficiency upgrades. Not only can it make your home more affordable, but it can make it more comfortable and increase the resale value. If you're building a new home, there are ways to build efficiency right into it.

The best first step is to contact Efficiency Vermont by calling 888-921-5990 or visiting www.efficiencyvermont.com. There you can find:

- Listings for BPI Certified Energy Efficiency Network contractors
- Technical assistance and incentives for energy-efficient new construction
- Rebates on the purchase of efficient equipment such as kitchen appliances, heat pump heating and cooling systems, water heating systems, and more
- Cash back incentives on air sealing and insulation projects through the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program
- DIY videos and online resources
- Guidance on financing and energy efficiency projects
- Resources on renewable energy systems



Other Resources

Vermont Gas Systems • 802-863-4511 | www.vermontgas.com

Burlington Electric Department • 802-865-7342 | www.burlingtonelectric.com

Vermont's Weatherization Program • www.dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/weatherization

Renewable Energy Resource Center • <http://www.nerc-vt.org/>

The Vermont Home Energy Profile pilot is a project of the Vermont Residential Energy Labeling Working Group:
publicservice.vermont.gov/energy_efficiency/buildingenergy_labeling

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VR-073 Rev. A