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DATE: March 12, 2026

TO: Representative Matt Birong, Chair, House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs

FROM: Eric Forand, Director, Division of Emergency Management, Dept. of Public Safety

SUBJECT: Internal security and public safety; emergency management; 3 miscellaneous amendments (dr req 26-0550 – draft 2.1)

Chair Birong- Please accept this memorandum as written testimony to the referenced bill currently in your committee.

Page 3: Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 53 is added to read: 20 § 53. TECHNICAL RESCUE GRANT PROGRAM

- Vermont Emergency Management, in coordination with the Division of Fire Safety have a program in place already to support participating agencies (fire departments) through the issuance of Memorandum of Understandings. The current model has the USAR program manager working with interested municipalities to initiate a local USAR team. This coordination assures that municipalities have the desire, resources, and backing to support a team long term. This model also ensures consistency of training and equipment across teams, allowing local teams to integrate seamlessly into the state response apparatus. This current program has 13 MOU teams across the state. **VEM recommends this language be changed to have the State USAR program manager received this funding and run the grant directly through the existing USAR program to supplement the work already being done to create a statewide USAR response capability.**

Page 8: Sec. 4. 20 V.S.A. § 3a is amended to read: § 3a. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION; DUTIES; BUDGET

- (B)(C) – These two new sections refer to Section (2) page 8, which calls out State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC), and Local and regional organizations for emergency management (EMD's). Requirement (B)(C) is a large added responsibility to these entities that are unfunded and voluntary. Requiring the addition of a coordinator or running more exercises, although good ideas are not feasible given the structure and funding of these groups. **VEM recommends this section be removed from the bill.**
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- (D) – Currently after-action reviews are conducted using the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). This is a federal level program that is used across the country by entities reviewing both real life events and exercises. Those running a HSEPP after action review have completed the FEMA 3-day HSEEP course to ensure consistency across after-action reviews. All areas of concern are raised during the review including accessibility gaps. Those gaps are then reports in the after-action review. **VEM recommends this section be removed from the bill.**

Page 9-11: Sec. 5. 20 V.S.A. § 6 is amended to read: §6. LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- (c) (1) Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMP) are drafted to ensure the entire population of the municipality are included in communications, response plans and operational support. VEM Regional Coordinators work with EMD to ensure they are thinking about the whole community including vulnerable populations, disabled populations and non-English speaking populations. There is no need to specifically call out a sub sector of the population when the language as written calls out all sectors of the populations. **VEM recommends this section be removed as it is redundant to the all-inclusive language currently being used.**
- (2) The current language already states “allows access by those in need”. This language is already inclusive of “all” in need including those with disabilities. **VEM recommends this section be removed as it is redundant to the all-inclusive language currently being used.**
- (4) disability led organizations are not defined in this bill. How would the town chose one, how many have to be included for them to adhere to this requirement? When planning training and exercises municipalities use the whole community approach. This approach includes all entities that may be involved in a response to be involved in the training or exercise, including those with disabilities. **VEM recommends this section be removed as it is redundant to the all-inclusive language currently being used.**
- (B) The REMC are voluntary organizations. The current language already allows any entity involved in emergency management or response to be able to become a non-voting member, including those organization representing individuals with disabilities. **VEM recommends this section be removed as it is redundant to the all-inclusive language currently being used.**
- (5) Regional Plans are drafted to ensure the entire population of the region is included in communications, response plans and operational support. VEM Regional Coordinators work with REMC to ensure they are thinking about the whole community, including vulnerable populations, disabled populations and non-English speaking populations. There is no need to specifically call out a sub sector of the population when the language as written calls out all sectors of the populations. **VEM recommends this section be removed as it is redundant to the all-inclusive language currently being used.**

Page 13: Sec. 7. 20 V.S.A. § 51 is amended to read: §6. LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- The VT Alert system can currently send messages via phone call (audio), via text & email (visual). **VEM recommends this section be removed as it is too vague and the system is currently available to all.**

Page 13: Sec. 8. PROIBITION OF CERTAIN DISABILITY REGISTERS

- These registries of individuals that have certain needs during a disaster are invaluable to EMDs and first responders. This database that is voluntary to join and securely allows first responder to understand the needs and challenges they might see in their community. **VEM recommends this section be removed as this resource is vital to response.**

In-closing: Thank you in advance for your consideration, if you need additional information please contact me directly.

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