

# THANK YOU!

VBSR's efforts during the 2025 Vermont Legislative Session have come to a close and we have much to celebrate – while still having more to accomplish in the rest of 2025. A heartfelt note of gratitude to all our members, partners and collaborators – especially those in the State House – whose engagement and persistence helped VBSR's 2025-2026 Advocacy Agenda gain traction.

Following is a high-level recap of this session's victories on our advocacy priorities. We will continue to harness the power of the business community to galvanize change in the Vermont State House and drive our state toward a new paradigm – a just, thriving, and transformative economy for all people and the planet.



VBSR member businesses engage in the annual Businesses for Climate Action Day, 2025.

## OUR CLIMATE FUTURE

### Climate Resilience:

- Successfully Defended the Global Warming Solutions Act: Throughout the legislative session VBSR members testified in front of key committees, joined together in Montpelier for our annual Businesses for Climate Action Lobby Day, and participated in driving over 600 calls to the legislature to defend Vermont's bedrock climate legislation against attacks in 2025.
- Commented on Draft Climate Action Plan: VBSR also met with members of the Climate Action Office and the Vermont Climate Council on multiple occasions to provide our formal input on how we can best promote climate resilience for Vermont businesses in the Draft Climate Action Plan to be finalized July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

### Climate Mitigation:

- Helped Advance Crucial Climate Funding: The FY26 Budget Includes Funding to Implement the Climate Superfund Act funding. VBSR knows the state will need additional funding in future years, but maintaining momentum to implement the bill this year is crucial. Vermont communities continue to face – and must prepare for – increasing climate disasters.

## CARE ECONOMY

### Childcare:

- Supported Big Wins for Child Care in the Budget: In the context of widespread uncertainty around federal funding and a difficult fiscal year for our state, Vermont continued to prioritize progress on child care this legislative session – and VBSR supported it. The FY26 budget includes \$5 million for a new child care reserve fund which will provide more long-term stability to the system, even in times of economic hardship, and help protect public investment in child care in future budget negotiations. A 5% increase, totaling \$5.5 million, in reimbursement rates for infants and toddlers will help child care programs expand capacity where it's needed most and increase access for families.

### Paid Family Medical Leave:

- Unpaid Medical Leave Signed Into Law: The Paid Family and Medical Leave Coalition, including VBSR, was thrilled that H.461 passed into law on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. These unpaid leave expansions are especially meant to protect LGBTQ+ employees and their families, individuals in need of bereavement leave, or those in need of Safe Leave in Vermont.

## EMPLOYEE BASIC NEEDS

### Healthcare:

- Medical Debt Relief Passes Into Law: VBSR is thrilled that the Governor signed S.27 which will forgive the medical debt of thousands of deserving community members; it should eliminate a significant amount of medical debt for approximately 60,000 low- and moderate-income Vermonters.

### Housing:

- Supported Key Housing Initiatives in the Budget: VBSR focused our housing advocacy on protecting affordable housing funds in the FY26 Budget. The final legislative draft funds VHCB's Property Transfer Tax share, split between VHCB's affordable housing and conservation missions – plus an additional \$5 million for affordable housing production. VBSR also strongly advocated for the \$16.1 million appropriated to the VHFA for the two middle income programs as well as no less than \$250k for the First-Generation Homebuyer grant program.

## NEXT STEPS FOR 2025

We eagerly await the return of the Vermont Legislature this fall to reconcile our state budget with the federal congressional budget. VBSR will continue to advocate for priority funding in the FY26 Budget on programs related to housing, child care, business support services, and more. These will be challenging conversations in unprecedented times and VBSR will continue to represent our 2025-2026 Advocacy Priorities in the State House through the end of 2025.

Additionally, the Climate Action Plan will be released on July 1st, 2025. VBSR will continue to participate in the implementation of the comprehensive Vermont plan on climate action. We look forward to seeing a plan which includes commitment to expand programming and funding for climate resilience and disaster relief for business – especially for small rural businesses and those run by women, LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals.

*JOHANNA DE GRAFFENREID, VBSR PUBLIC POLICY MANAGER*



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### VALUES-LED CHANGE IS A TEAM SPORT

In addition to our collaborators in the State House, VBSR partners with dozens of organizations and member businesses to pursue our goals. Below is a list of some of those indispensable collaborators.

- Partners: #ActOnClimateCoalition, Conservation Law Foundation, Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, Let's Grow Kids, Renewable Energy Vermont, Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC), Vermont Conservation Voters (VCV), Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Vermont Paid Leave Coalition, VPIRG
- VBSR Members: Andy Robinson Consulting, Burlington Electric Department, Burton, Compose[d], Empowering Leadership Teams, Encore Renewable Energy, First Roots Wild Roots, Fringe Impact, Gordon's Window Décor, Green Mountain United Way, Groenfell Meadery, Interchain LLC, Lawson's Finest Liquids, Leading in Nested Systems, LineSync Architecture, Marketing Partners Inc, Mia Moore Consulting, Natural Designs LLC, NOFA-VT, Norwich Solar, Old Spokes Home, Reframe Lab, Rhino Foods, Seventh Generation, SunCommon, SustainVT by LBP Consulting, The Alchemist, The Co-Op Food Stores of NH and Vermont, The Law Office of Nancy A. Barbour PLLC, The Mountain Goat, The Silva Group LLC, tonique mobile bar, Turtle Fur, Vermont Creamery, WheelPad L3C, Working Fields