

2023 Town Meeting Report

State Representative Lucy Boyden

Lamoille-3 | Cambridge & Waterville



We're halfway through the 2023 legislative session!

We've passed some significant legislation in these first two months. Work on our key priorities will continue across the House and in collaboration with the Senate, as we discuss bills and consider investments.

It's an honor to serve as your state representative. Please reach out anytime with ideas, questions, and concerns.

2023 Legislative Priorities

While none of these challenges can be solved in a single session, some priorities of the legislature include:

- Tackling the complex and interconnected challenges of housing, workforce, and child care.
- Enacting forward-looking strategies to combat climate change and transition towards more sustainable ways of living.
- Supporting business stability and growth in all corners of Vermont, and increasing the capacity of our rural communities to access resources and plan for a vibrant future.

With 150 members and 13 standing committees, the House is working hard to meet the needs of Vermonters during our five months in Montpelier.

Connect with Lucy

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Call and leave me a message at the Sergeant at Arms office in the State House at (802) 828-2228.

All legislative activity, committee agendas, meeting records, and livestreams can be found on <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>

Housing

The 2020 Re-Housing Recovery Program was originally envisioned as a one-time-budget program funded through the CARES Act. Its success in bringing 240 units back onto the low-income rental market in one year exceeded expectations. As a result, the program has become a more stable and expansive feature of Vermont's housing solutions portfolio.

The Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) offers grants of up to \$50,000 to make necessary repairs and upgrades to vacant apartments to return them to the rental housing market. By employing the expertise of housing services providers, units are then reserved for low-income renters or those exiting homelessness at a rate below fair market rental rates for a period of five years.

The legislature is actively developing H.111 and S.100, bills relating to creating more housing opportunities.

Child Care and Early Childhood Education

The lack of affordable, high-quality early childhood education profoundly impacts Vermont and our economy.

As introduced, H. 208, an act relating to child care and early childhood education, develops a blueprint for a significant investment in our children, families, and communities. The bill would significantly increase state-funded financial assistance for children in child care, expand the current funding for part-time pre-K to a full-time program for all 4-year-olds. The bill would also increase compensation for early childhood educators, financial support for community and home-based child care programs by reimbursing centers for enrollment, and elevate and streamline state-level oversight of early childhood education.

Sheriffs and Law Enforcement

In several counties VT sheriffs have recently experienced multiple financial scandals and even criminal charges brought against them.

We are actively working on training and accountability updates in two bills related to the Vermont Criminal Justice Council which is responsible for certifying all law enforcement officers. A Senate bill, S.17, looks at the laws regarding bonus policies as well as hiring and termination policies for Vermont sheriffs.

Building Our Workforce

There is critical need for more trained, skilled workers in every sector. Developing and improving incentives and workforce training pipelines for essential workers, including within health care, construction, and education, will prove vital. So far this year, the House Commerce Committee made revisions to the nurse preceptor grants program through the FY23 Budget Adjustment Act. Members of House Commerce are also serving on a cross-committee group to expand teacher retention and hiring incentives.

Conservation & Resilience

As the climate changes, strategic conservation of land and water is critical to protect biodiversity and ensure continued ecological and economic benefits from a resilient and connected landscape.

The legislature's "30x30" bill, H.126, requires the Agency of Natural Resources to develop a plan to permanently conserve 30% of our landscape by 2030 and 50% by 2050. Currently, roughly 26% of Vermont is conserved in a way that aligns with this bill. More than 100 countries, including the United States, have signed onto 30x30 goals. Three categories of conservation are defined in the bill, ranging from working lands to passively managed lands for old forest. To chart a path for accomplishing these goals, the Agency of Natural Resources will direct a planning process that includes broad input from regional and local entities as well as an updated inventory of conserved land.

The Senate is also actively developing S.5, the affordable heat standard. In the near future, the bill will come to the House where we will have the opportunity to influence the language.

The legislature has very little power to hold sheriffs responsible for misconduct, absent impeachment proceedings or a constitutional amendment. We expect that a proposal to amend the state constitution to provide the legislature with the power to require professional certification and financial regulation and oversight of sheriffs will pass the Senate this year, but will take 4+ years to take effect.