

PHILIP B. SCOTT  
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 13, 2024

The Honorable Betsy Ann Wrask  
Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Ms. Wrask:

Today I am allowing H.649, *An act relating to the Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, to become law without my signature.

I am concerned that although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a taxpayer-funded governmental body, with a budget of over \$1 million in Fiscal Year 2025, this bill carves out a special exception from the Open Meetings Law for Commission deliberations. This means there will be no visibility into the Commission's consideration of evidence or testimony, or discussions of the reasons for or against the Commission's acts or decisions.

As the Vermont Supreme Court has noted, the overriding goal of open government "is nothing less than foundational to our republic. In the words of John Adams:

Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right ... and a desire to know; but besides this, they have a right, an independent right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean of the characters and conduct of their rulers."  
Hum. Rts. Def. Ctr. v. Correct Care Sols., LLC, 2021 VT 63 (2021).

I understand the politics are sensitive, but knowing what the government is doing and how it's doing it is fundamental to a healthy, functioning democracy regardless of the politics.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip B. Scott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott  
Governor

PBS/kp