

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Terry Cunningham (C-U-N-N-I-N-G-H-A-M) and I am the Deputy Mayor of Bozeman. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 551 today.

Bozeman faces the double whammy of having to fund the infrastructure necessary to accommodate significant, sustained population growth while simultaneously having to fund the cost of replacing aging infrastructure, from sewer pipes and water lines to old fire stations and police facilities.

Whether it's building a new public safety center, providing a branch library on the west side of town, building our first swim facility in 50 years, or updating our water reclamation plant to meet new discharge guidelines, we have a host of projects that need to be funded. And the primary funding source is property taxes.

Our local school district and the county rely on the same funding source for their projects as well, which means we're all pulling on the same lever – property taxes - and our residents are feeling understandably burdened.

SB 551 addresses this issue in two ways: it allows us to provide property tax relief to residents, and it provides an alternate funding source for growth-related costs. It does so by targeting tourists, the one group that uses city infrastructure and services, but doesn't pay for that privilege.

I urge you to consider a do-pass on SB 551 to provide relief and tax fairness to our citizens.