



April 1, 2024

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee members,

We write as members of the Vermont Association of Court Diversion and Pre-trial Services, or VACDP, regarding our support of H. 645, supporting the expansion of Diversion into the Pre-Charge realm. We are a non-profit organization comprised of the directors of Vermont's grant-recipient agencies of the Court Diversion and Pretrial Services managed by the Attorney General's Office, and represent all 14 counties of the state. Some of our agencies also receive funding from the Department of Corrections and the Department for Children and Families for restorative justice services, and some do not.

We believe in the logic of placing pre-charge within the Diversion statute and moving the oversight and management of the program from the DOC to the AGO. Our experience being managed by the Community Justice Unit of the AGO, led by Willa Farrell, has been extremely positive, and we have consistently felt like partners in the range of offerings our contracts cover, from developing new programs, evaluating and modifying existing programs to advocating for legislative changes when trends observed 'in the field' warrant them.

As you know, funding is required to implement any kind of state-wide program, and without a State appropriation, we as Directors are concerned about an unfunded mandate. We want to provide high quality services that allows for work with the victims and the responsible parties, includes adequate administrative support as well as evaluation and data tracking. We appreciate attention being given to funding this work beginning with the FY26 budget.

VACDP has a strong culture of collaboration, and we support all of our colleagues doing the hard and powerful work of restorative justice, funded by DCF, DOC, as well as the AGO. Thank you for the attention you're giving to these services and helping to ensure access to them for more Vermonters.

Sincerely,

Jean Stone
Addison County Restorative Justice Services
Leitha Cipriano
Center for Restorative Justice, Bennington
Jessie Schmidt
Orange County Restorative Justice Center
Alexis Proia
NEK Community Action, Orleans
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