

**Testimony of Cary Brown, Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women  
Vermont Senate Committee on Government Operations**

**RE: H125, an act relating to boards and commissions  
April 20, 2023**

Good afternoon. My name is Cary Brown and I am the Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women.

The Vermont Commission on Women was created by an act of the Vermont General Assembly in 2001, and has had its statute amended a few times in the years since. The authorizing statute is currently found in [3 V.S.A. § 5025](#). Changes made in recent legislative sessions have greatly improved the Commission's ability to function effectively and efficiently, but there remains one change that, while seemingly small, would be very helpful.

This letter is to request that you consider amending H125, an act relating to boards and commissions, to include a small change to the quorum requirement in the VCW statute.

Currently, the statute states, "Nine members shall constitute a quorum of the Commission." When all seats on the Commission are filled, there are 16 members. In this case, a quorum of nine is reasonable and appropriate. However, the members of the Commission are appointed by three different appointing authorities (the Governor appoints eight, the Speaker of the House appoints four, and the Senate Committee on Committees appoints four) with revolving terms, and there are times when we do have some vacancies that mean we have fewer than 16 members at any given time. While our members are generally engaged and dedicated, and we don't often have trouble meeting the requirement of nine to conduct business, it would give us an additional level of security and functionality if our quorum were defined as a majority of members.

A scan of the quorum definitions in statute for other boards and commissions turns up some examples of bodies whose quorums are specified by number, while many others simply state that a majority of members constitutes a quorum (see [3 V.S.A. § 132](#), board quorums; [3 V.S.A. § 168](#), Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel; and [3 V.S.A. § 247](#), Rental Housing Advisory Board, for example).

**A change from "Nine members shall constitute a quorum of the Commission" to "A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum" would be very helpful.**

Thank you so much for your consideration of this request, and we would be happy to speak with you further, answer any questions, and share any additional information.