



**H. 53 – Dolan Kornheiser Amendment**  
**Jessica Barquist, Policy and Organizing Director**  
**4/28/23 Senate Judiciary Committee**

The Vermont Network strongly supports the Dolan Kornheiser amendment to H.53 which would allocate a portion of revenues from marriage license fees to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund, which is currently experiencing a projected \$350,000 deficit due to declining revenues. This deficit is due in large part to a number of policy changes like the one presented in the underlying bill, many of which we have whole-heartedly supported, to reduce the burdens of court fines and fees on individuals.

**Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund**

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund was established in 2008, is set forth in 13 V.S.A. § 5360 and is administered by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services. The fund serves as a primary revenue source for critically important services for victims, as well as systems which improve public responses to domestic and sexual violence.

The revenues for the Fund are currently comprised of a portion of two revenue sources, a surcharge on criminal and civil judgements and a portion of the marriage fee.

Currently, there is a \$60 marriage license fee.

- Of the marriage license fee, currently:
  - \$35 goes to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund
  - \$10 is retained by the town of issuance
  - \$15 goes to the General Fund

This fund provides approximately \$900,000 annually to support the provision of statewide and local victim services. The revenues from the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund are used in the following ways:

- Almost half of the fund is passed through directly to local domestic and sexual violence organizations using a funding formula that accounts for variables such as population, geographic area served and services provided.
- Approximately \$90,000/year is distributed to Member Organizations as direct support for survivors and is used for immediate expenses such as housing, transportation or other basic needs services.
- Funding for Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services which provides services to victims of crime in Vermont who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing.
- Funding for SafeSpace at the Pride Center of Vermont which is a statewide anti-violence program which provides advocacy services to victims of crime who are LGBTQ.
- Funding to support staffing for the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence.
- Funding to support the Vermont Network's statewide work to support local member organizations.
- Historically, the fund has also supported staffing costs for a domestic violence trainer at the Vermont Police Academy at the Vermont Criminal Justice Council. The Governor's Recommended budget moves this expense to the Vermont Criminal Justice Council's budget. We support this shift.



In 2022, the Joint Fiscal Office issued a report on the status of crime victim special funds and made recommendations for potential policy solutions<sup>1</sup> and expanding the marriage license fees was one of the potential solutions outlined in this report.

### **H. 53 Amendment**

The Dolan Kornheiser amendment would increase the marriage license fee from \$60 to \$80. Of the \$20 increase to the marriage fee, an additional \$5 will go to the Town Clerks and the remaining \$15 will be allocated to the DV/SV Fund. The JFO fiscal note<sup>2</sup> has estimated that this will result in a \$72,000 increase in special fund revenue. This fund increase is critical to maintaining current levels of services for victims across the state.

---

<sup>1</sup> [2022 Joint Fiscal Office Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> [2023 JFO Fiscal Note](#)