

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and Mr. Vice-Chair-

I am reaching out now because the House amended version of S.6 has passed and is officially through that Chamber. As you may recall, I was present in your Committee last week when you took up the version of the bill as it existed at the time, reviewing the changes that the House had proposed. I remain very concerned about the impact of S.6, particularly the version that passed the House.

As I indicated last week, we were in support of the testimony offered by the many members of the law enforcement and investigatory community who testified in the House, and who shared their serious misgivings with respect to S.6. Specifically, I had suggested that the Committee hear from Samantha Prince, Director of the Windham County SIU/CAC, who is also a trained forensic interviewer with a decade long background with DCYF. As Ms. Prince is a constituent of Senator Hashim's, with his permission, I provided her with his contact information. Since then, both Ms. Prince and State's Attorney Shriver informed me that they have shared their concerns directly with Senator Hashim.

Notably, your Committee also received testimony on the record last week detailing specific concerns with S.6, particularly relative to the House proposed amendments. As you no doubt recall, this testimony was provided from the Department of Public Safety, the Vermont Attorney General, the Vermont Police Association and the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs. As I noted last week, when I reached out to the SIU Program Directors, in addition to Samantha, every director also voiced their concerns with the changes proposed in S.6. It should be noted that these directors are not state employees, nor do they have any relation to the Administration. The Center joins with these parties and shares their expressed concerns about S.6.

Unfortunately, next to no time remains at this juncture. From our standpoint, the Senate version is far more preferable to the House, and if there is a determination to do something this year rather than let it lie until the next, the Center would urge that a version as close to the one that passed the Senate is moved. The Center finds the recommendations put forth in the memo submitted by Domenica Padula, Office of the Attorney General, particularly persuasive, and we hope you will consider them. We are especially mindful of the concerns expressed by the AGO and the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs about the creation of "mini-trials" that the House version contemplates, as this is likely to have a negative impact both on an already back-logged judicial system and on victims as well, who will experience yet more delays.

There are no easy answers to the serious issues confronting our state and our communities, and we appreciate your thoughtful and sincere commitment to a balanced approach to address our collective challenges.

Very truly yours, Jennifer