

March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Vermont's twelve certified Domestic Violence Accountability Programs (DVAPs) provide programming options for people who have caused harm to an intimate partner and want to change the way they behave in their relationships. Programs offer participants the opportunity to examine their use of violence, take accountability for their behaviors, learn new tools to change how they interact in their intimate relationships, and have healthier relationships with themselves.

As providers of the state's certified DVAPs, we are very grateful for recent state appropriations to support our work since the elimination of participant fees. The removal of fees has been a positive step towards better addressing state standards on equity and flexibility. Fees are no longer a barrier to participation or a burden on the household incomes of survivors and children who continue to share expenses with program participants.

Vermont's DVAPs employ a variety of nationally recognized curricula and most participants are referred by the Department of Corrections or the Department for Children and Families as part of supervision conditions. Our programs undergo a certification process using community review teams and standards developed by the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence and the Center for Justice Innovation.

In addition to our work in weekly group sessions, we spend time preparing for classes, managing sometimes complex intakes, collecting data, participating in trainings, and coordinating with community partners, including the Department of Corrections and the Department for Children and Families. We are doing more than ever to play our part in Vermont's response to domestic violence.

***To continue this work, we need a stable, reliable source of base funding of \$850,000 (level funding from FY 2024).*** Both the Legislature and Vermont's Justice Reinvestment Initiative project on domestic violence have asked Vermont DVAPs to address cultural and regional gaps in our programming. As we add new groups and new certified programs to our statewide offerings in response, it is critical that we can sustain this growth. We are currently in the process of adding additional groups at the request of DOC regional field offices and need to know that we can anticipate stable funding for this work. Stable base funding will ensure that our programs remain operational, that we can provide services in all 14 counties, and that we are able to continuously improve our services.

Thank you for your continued support and consideration.

Sincerely,

Olivia Plunkett, Ignite Change, Essex, Caledonia and Orleans Counties

Bill Pelz-Walsh, Taking Responsibility, Windham County

Martha McClafferty, Circles of Peace, Windsor County

Melissa Deas, Domestic Violence to Responsible Choices, Addison and Chittenden Counties

John Winchester, Caring Dads and Domestic Abuse Educations Project of Bennington County

Danielle Clayton, Clara Martin Center, Windsor County

Tricia LaPlante, Domestic Violence Education Project, Windsor County

Yvonne Byrd, Revisions, Washington County

Judy Rickstadt, Northwest Accountability, Franklin and Grand Isle Counties

Brent Hatley, Rutland Domestic Violence Programming LLC, Rutland County

Carol Plante, Parenting with Respect, Washington County