



March 17, 2023

TO: Rep. Mike McCarthy, Chair, House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs,

From: Karen Tronsgard-Scott, Executive Director

RE: DR 23-0959, VCJC recommendations for law enforcement officer training

Dear Chair McCarthy,

Thank you for your continued work and taking testimony on your committee bill 23-0959, to enact new, evidence-based approaches to law enforcement officer training provided by the Vermont Policy Academy. The Vermont Network represents 15 Member Organizations throughout the state who provide advocacy and support to victims of domestic and sexual violence. In 2022, these organizations served 8,241 individuals in person and answered 19,118 hotline calls from Vermonters seeking information and support regarding domestic and sexual violence. On behalf of our members and the victims they serve, the Vermont Network strongly supports the proposed changes, moving our training of law enforcement officers from a time-based training protocol to a skills and competency-based training protocol.

I have personally served on the Vermont Criminal Justice Council for the past two years and have gained an understanding about the importance of training Vermont's law enforcement officers to be the most competent and best possible public servants. To do this, it is vitally important the law enforcement officers receive their first and foundational academy training with an emphasis on skills and competencies. Furthermore, as a member of the Professional Regulation Subcommittee, I have witnessed the need for skill and competency training that gives law enforcement officers the tools they need to make the right decisions in high stress situations.

In 2009 the Vermont Network promoted mandatory, time-based training for all law enforcement officers. At that time, we posited that 2 hours of training every two years on issues related to domestic and sexual violence responses would be the ideal. Today we are actively engaged in advocacy for a different approach, one that focuses on skills and competencies. We believe that such training will result in better outcomes for the victims of these crimes, noting that, according to the Department of Public Safety's Heat Map dashboard, domestic and sexual violence are Vermont's most frequently reported violent crimes. We are actively working with the VCJC and Police Academy to create a curriculum that improves measured outcomes and metrics. We know that training that

focuses on skills and competencies may take more time, perhaps much more time. Removing time requirements provides us with the opportunity to focus on the quality of the training and the impact of the training rather than on an attachment to the idea that time has a relationship to competency.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Tronsgard-Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end of the name.

Karen Tronsgard-Scott  
Executive Director  
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence