

# Lissa Schneckenburger, VFAPA Board Member

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I support S. 189 and the proposed amendment. I am looking forward to having a work group of interested parties that will iron out any confusing wording or redundancy in the bill, and I believe that by January of next year we will have a much stronger document to share with the legislature.

## Reasons to support S. 189

- Foster parents in Vermont must have a bill that protects their rights. Currently, we don't have documented rights and we are often cautious to share concerns with DCF. When foster parents do not feel supported, children's outcomes suffer.
- Much of this bill solidifies what is already known to be best practice. We realize that several of the items in the original bill are already DCF policy, but we feel that is not enough. Policies can change, and have historically been implemented with great inconsistency throughout our state.
- Sixteen other states have already passed a Foster Parent Bill of Rights, so there is a sizable existing precedent with lots of positive outcomes
- Arkansas passed a similar bill in 2007 and every year since the number of new foster homes recruited increased, and the number of total foster homes available increased significantly (Arkansas Annual Report Card).
- VFAPA also conducted a survey of 97 foster parents in 20 different states, who collectively have cared for over 1,000 children spanning several decades. We found that in states with an existing bill of rights, 66% of those surveyed said they were very likely to accept another placement (as opposed to 44% likelihood in states without a bill of rights).
- Likewise, in states with an existing bill of rights 80% of those surveyed said they were very likely to refer a friend to take a placement (as opposed to 63% likelihood in states without a bill of rights).
- There is no question that it is paramount that Vermont do better at both keeping trained foster parents and recruiting new families in order to care for the increase of children in state custody.
- According to the VT 2015 Annual Report our state was below the national average and needed improvement in stability of foster care placement, addressing needs of foster parents, giving notice of hearings, foster parent training, and diligent recruitment of foster homes.