

Good afternoon Representatives Pugh and Haas,

I am writing to let you know that the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence (Council) held our quarterly meeting on March 4, 2015. At that meeting, Council Members considered the recommendations of our Legislative Review Committee. After thoughtful discussion, the Council made the decision to oppose Section Three of 13 VSA, 1304a.

I have prepared the attached memo, which I hope you will share with the members of the House Committee on Human Services, to make you aware of our opposition to this legislation, which may serve to hold victims of domestic violence responsible for harm perpetrated by a former or current partner. Furthermore, the Council does not support the addition of an “affirmative defense” section, as it is an ineffective remedy which proves “too little, too late,” for victims of domestic violence and their children.

The Council is aware of the considerable task the Vermont Legislature is undertaking by thoroughly examining Vermont’s response to children at risk, and we hail your efforts. Children lost their lives unnecessarily last year, and we join you in a dedication to ensure that this does not happen again. However, we are convinced that the enactment of laws such as Section Three of 13 VSA, 1304a will only serve to further victimize children and their protective, or non-offending parents.

On behalf of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence, I respectfully ask the House Committee on Human Services to remove Section 3, 13 VSA, 1304a and this threat which may further harm children and victims of domestic violence.

We urge the House Committee to focus instead on strengthening the good work that has been done to make Vermont’s child protective services system a child-centered one, maintaining focus on holding offenders accountable, while working with non-offending, protective parents to build their capacity to re-build new lives together with their children.

If you have any questions, or would like more information about the Council, (I have included our Basic Information and most recent Biennial Report) please contact me at (802) 917-1793 or [vtdvcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:vtdvcouncil@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

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