

Dear Erik,

I have been told that there are a couple of amendments to S.141 that may be considered by the House Judiciary Committee and that it might be useful for DRVT to clarify our thoughts on two issues. One regards the Senate language that requires waiting 18 months before an individual who has been under an order of hospitalization or an order of non-hospitalization must wait to apply for "relief from disability". As I said in the committee, we feel that the issue is whether an individual presents a specific danger, NOT the fact that he or she has a particular psychiatric disability and so we support allowing the individual to apply for relief when he or she feels that a valid case can be made.

The second issue relates to amending the bill to provide a right to representation in the process of "relief from disability" and designating the Mental Health Law Project the role, just as they are designated in commitment and medication cases. Although we do feel that legal assistance would be desirable, DRVT is not in the position to offer an opinion as to whether this is a role that should be designated to MHLP. From a practical standpoint, without additional resources other assistance that Vermont Legal Aid offers to low income Vermonters might suffer, though they may have a different view of how to handle that.

I will not be able to be at the Statehouse tomorrow and wonder if you would mind conveying this note to the committee? I have "copied" Representative Grad on this note.

Many Thanks, Ed

Ed Paquin
Executive Director
Disability Rights Vermont, Inc.