

Hello Representatives Pugh and French-

I understand that in Committee today there was a discussion and some concern relative to language in S.9 that strikes domestic violence cases in current enabling language as cases SIUs are charged with investigating. While this proposal did not come from us, the impact on current practice would be negligible and reflect what the Units were initially intended to address and the crimes they currently do respond to. Only one SIU responds to domestic violence cases, and that Unit is the only one in our state not currently affiliated with a child advocacy center (CAC). That being said, all of the SIU/CAC directors support the current version of S.9 with the recommendations I submitted in today's written testimony.

I agree that specialized services should be provided in domestic violence cases, and fortunately here in Vermont we do have many such services, and in our more populous counties have specialized domestic violence prosecutors, investigators and victim advocates - which also have designated federal funding sources, such as funding from the STOP Violence Against Women and Violence Against Women Act grants (STOP and VAWA funds respectively).

The question for us, and under S.9, is how do we most effectively support children who are potentially the victims of abuse. We support the fact that under S.9 we will be mandated to handle certain crimes and agree with the current proposals on the table - even though we are being asked to do more with less. This mandate is critical in the interests of furthering consistency across our state, and also appropriately builds on the current training, knowledge, resources and expertise of the Units and their partner CACs. Unfortunately, an expectation that Units should address additional crimes not squarely within their current realm of expertise will be a disservice to these victims and to our communities.

Should you get this today or tomorrow morning I plan to be in the statehouse should further comment be valuable. I am also happy if you find it valuable to share this email with the entire Committee. Thank you for your vigilance on behalf of so many! Jenn

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