

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

Please scrap S.141.

As someone who has reported on disability issues, I question if S. 141 will square with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Under ADA, Vermonters with mental health disabilities are a federally protected class of citizens. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that the law be applied equally to everyone.

Civil liberties for people with mental health conditions can not be segmented apart to be categorically denied.

S. 141, with its discriminatory treatment of people with mental health disabilities, would put Vermont in direct confrontation with federal law.

I spent the year leading to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as the legislative reporter with the Boston Center Independent Living. The rhetoric from Gunsense"VT" promoting stereotypes and stigma of people with mental health issues echoes the stories of discrimination I heard from people with mental health disabilities as they testified before the Congressional Panel on which Senator Edward Kennedy (D) was seated as a lead sponsor of ADA.

Returning to the well for the third legislative session, Gunsense"VT" has shifted its fear mongering to cast people with mental health issues as dangerous.

In reality, people with psychiatric disabilities are no more violent than people without.

It is a sad day in Vermont when our Democratic leaders side with Ann Braden, a woman who has misrepresented herself to the State Legislature in order to further the agenda of out-of-state interests, against a population championed by Senator Kennedy.

To entertain proposed legislation that not only violates the rights of a federally protected class of Vermont citizens, but also runs counter to the spirit of the aim of the Americans with Disabilities Act—to create a more just and equal society—is the wrong direction for Vermont.

I am not a gun owner, I am a citizen grown tired of the foolishness in Montpelier,

Eileen Foster

P.S. In 2012, I produced a series of public service announcements for PBS, cable and web distribution featuring Vermonters with intellectual disabilities, including autism. These spots were to increase the understanding of Vermonters with intellectual disabilities as members of our communities. I would hate to think these folks would be next to be targeted for increased discrimination due to the rhetoric of Gunsense. Vermont is my Home:

<https://vimeo.com/channels/vermontismyhome>