

Testimony on S.221
An Act Relating to Law Enforcement Officers
Senate Committee on Government Operations
Response to letter provided by Cara Cookson of the
Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services

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The Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council would like to take this opportunity to respond to the letter by Ms. Cookson requesting that the Committee include a designated seat for VCCVS on the Council.

The Council discussed the request during the 01/27 meeting (to which Ms. Cookson was invited but did not appear) and decided it would not support it for the following reasons, in no particular order:

- Designated seats on the Council have been for the leaders of criminal justice agencies who are responsible for all aspects of their agency's operations. These individuals are best suited to assess the impact of Council decisions on their agencies specifically and the advancement of the criminal justice profession in general.
- The Council, as a body, does not develop training standards. Training standards are developed in the various Council subcommittees before being brought to the Council for ratification. The VCCVS and other training stakeholders already participate in this process at their discretion, so the VCCVS is already "allowed" to have as much voice as it would like. Ms. Cookson is correct that the domestic violence subcommittee doesn't meet often—it meets when necessary, to develop and evaluate training.
- Ms. Cookson points out that the Council does not include any victim representation, which, while technically correct, overlooks the fact that victim interaction and welfare and victim rights are part of the basic training models because of standards developed in the subcommittees with participation from advocates. Significant sections of some trainings are devoted to proper interaction with victims.
- Ms. Cookson also states that the current CJTC roster does not include any lay people unaffiliated with law enforcement or prosecution, an assertion that is not accurate.



Currently, Joe Damiata from the VLCT and Gary Moore, unaffiliated with any organization, both hold a Governor-appointed “at large” seat.

- Adding a specific seat for VCCVS would mean that, in fairness, the legislature would also have to add a seat for any non-criminal justice organization with peripheral connections with the criminal justice system that requests one.

In summary, the Council believes that the VCCVS is already perfectly positioned for working with the Council and, in Ms. Cookson’s words, “ensuring that no crime victim lacks the information they need to keep themselves safe, that victims have access the (sic) programs and services to which they are entitled, and that investigative practices empower victims wherever possible.”