

### Memorandum

**To: Members of the Senate Health & Welfare Committee**  
**From: Ken Schatz, Commissioner of DCF**  
**Cindy Walcott, Deputy Commissioner**  
**Date: February 25, 2016**  
**Re: Recommendation for S.189**

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on S.189, an Act relating to parent's rights and protections. As we conveyed to the committee last week, we deeply appreciate foster families and agree with the spirit of this bill - that they deserve our support and recognition of their role in our child welfare system.

Given that many of the proposed provisions are already contained in DCF policy or regulation, and that more discussion is needed of certain sections in order to avoid unintended consequences including conflict with existing state or federal law, we would like to respectfully request that the committee consider delaying movement on this bill as it is written. Instead we would like to have the opportunity to meet with the Vermont Foster and Adoptive Families Association (VFafa) and the judiciary to collaboratively develop a set of recommendations ensuring Foster Parents have clear rights and protections.

To that end, we propose a strike all to the language in all sections of S.189 and propose a new Section 1 directing that we work collaboratively to provide the committee with a new set of recommendations. Please find our suggested change below:

S.189 Sec. 1 is amended to read:

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The Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families is directed to work with representatives of the Vermont Foster and Adoptive Families Association, and the judiciary to:

1. Review the current proposal for a Foster Parent Bill of Rights;
2. Review Foster Parent Bill of Rights components that are incorporated in other state statutes;
3. Develop a statement of roles, authority and responsibilities of foster parents that is appropriate for use in Vermont;
4. Develop a recommendation about whether such a statement is most appropriate to exist in statute, rule or policy;
5. Submit a report and the recommendations to the Chairs of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee and House Human Services Committee by 11/1/2016.

