

February 13, 2018

Maida Townsend  
Chair, Government Operations Committee

Re: Bill H.689 (Funding for Domestic Violence Accountability Programs)

Dear Rep. Townsend and Committee Members,

I am writing to ask for your support of House Bill H.689 which would help with the costs of running domestic violence (dv) programs, and fund the position of DV Council Coordinator in Vermont. I work as a Reentry Coordinator for the Great Barre Community Justice Center, and also co-facilitate ACTV (Achieving Change through Value Based Behavior), a domestic accountability group. As a Reentry Coordinator I work with offenders who attend multiple groups they are required to attend as part of their conditions of release each week. While some of these are free of charge or covered by insurance, domestic violence accountability groups are fee based to cover operational cost. In the event an offender is not able to pay for group, they can be sanctioned or violated by their Probation/Parole Officer, brought before a judge, and/or re-incarcerated. This is not a cost effective approach and is also counterproductive to the work I do as a restorative justice practitioner.

I believe that it is critical that we continue the work of breaking the cycle of violence against women and children, and ask for your support of House Bill H.689 as a way to break the cycle and restore safety in our communities. Funding domestic violence accountability programs provide a necessary and critical service to our communities. In addition, they offer the offender the tools they need to change their violent behaviors.

Thank you for your service and support. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

Ryan Stevenson  
802-917-8432