

THOMAS J. DONOVAN, JR.
ATTORNEY GENERAL

JOSHUA R. DIAMOND
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

WILLIAM E. GRIFFIN
CHIEF ASST. ATTORNEY GENERAL



TEL: (802) 828-3171
FAX: (802) 828-3187

<http://www.ago.vermont.gov>

**STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
109 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT
05609-1001**

**ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL JAMIE RENNER
TESTIMONY RE AMENDMENT TO H. 265**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this amendment. My name is Jamie Renner. I'm an Assistant Attorney General in our Attorney General Office's Consumer Protection Division and I focus on issues affecting seniors. I'm here on behalf of the Attorney General's Office to testify in support of the proposed amendment to H. 265.

- As Legal Aid and COVE have testified, VT is not immune from the problem of financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.
- Against that backdrop, this amendment fills a notable gap in state law. Currently, Vermont state agencies have the statutory right to bring both criminal and civil actions against a person who engages in the financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult.
- This amendment would simply provide the vulnerable adult, or their agent/guardian, the right to bring such a lawsuit on his/her own behalf.
- Currently, a vulnerable adult has some options for addressing financial exploitation through common law, but those options are limited and not specific to the problem or vulnerable demographic at hand. This amendment provides a clear roadmap for litigants and courts seeking to address this kind of harm. Additionally, unlike common law, it provides plaintiffs the opportunity to recover attorney's fees and exemplary damages, which, respectively, lower the financial barriers to bringing such a lawsuit and deter this undesirable conduct in the first place.
- The amendment is narrowly tailored in that it only allows lawsuits and remedies against the person who perpetrated the exploitation, not innocent third parties who might have property interests at stake.
- In passing this law, VT would join the company of many other states who have already passed similar legislation or are seeking to do so this year.