

January 19, 2017

The Honorable Phil Scott  
109 State Street  
Pavilion Building  
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing as the Chair of the Board for the Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations (CUSI). The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations provides a critical multi-agency service for victims of abuse and sexual assault and is a non-profit agency funded by grants, donations of police officers who serve as investigators by our member communities and donations from other municipalities and individuals. On average, CUSI investigates over 280 cases a year; over 62 % of those cases involve child victims. We are facing an ongoing problem of financial sustainability for the Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations (as are the other eleven SIUs throughout the State). The case load continues to increase while mandates from the State Legislature (most recently Act 60, S.9 in the 2015-16 Legislative Session) also continue to add to our work load.

**CUSI is facing a rent increase of \$49,000 per year from the State of Vermont's Building and General Services Division.** We are currently housed in a State owned, Class B basement type, windowless facility that provides a comfortable place for interviewing and meeting with victims of abuse. Unfortunately, we will be forced to move our operations for more affordable space because of the State working at cross purposes with CUSI. Act 60 or S. 9, known as "**An Act Relating to Improving Vermont's Systems for Protecting Children From Abuse and Neglect**" acknowledges that:

- "we must invest properly in proven strategies,"
- "be properly funded,"
- "the dedicated frontline professionals, who struggle to handle the seemingly ever-increasing caseloads have the support, training and resources necessary to do their job," and
- with various committees of the General Assembly, "continue to enhance the statewide approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect."

**It is ironic that the State has placed additional mandates and requirements for our CUSI investigative team as a result of the passage of Act 60, and is now asking us to go from a \$1,000 per year rent to a \$50,000 annual rent as of 7/1/2019.** We believe we should be partners with the State of Vermont in this important service that provides "access to justice, combatting violent crimes and aiding crime victims." (From 2014 Legislative Study Committee Report on SIU's Executive Summary).

As you determine priorities for the upcoming legislative session, we implore you to:

- Direct the Buildings and General Services staff to arrive at a more reasonable lease rate and terms for what is Class B office space; and
- Follow up on the Legislative Study Committee's Report of the Special Investigations Unit Funding Study Committee" dated December, 2014 by assisting us in implementing measures to improve the financial sustainability for SIUs as suggested by the committee.

We stand ready to assist you in advocating for more reasonable lease terms and for additional funding in the budget process and seek your advice as to our next steps.

We respectfully request a meeting with key members of the General Assembly and the Administration during this legislative session and prior to our lease running out in July of 2017 to determine a path forward that we can all support and allow us to continue the important mission of CUSI for the State of Vermont.

Sincerely,



Dawn H. Francis, Chair  
Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations (CUSI) Board

Copies To:

Agency of Administration Secretary Susanne Young  
BGS Commissioner Chris Cole  
House Speaker Mitzi Johnson  
Senate Pro Tempore Tim Ashe  
Rep. Alice Emmons  
Sen. Peg Flory  
Sen. Richard Sears  
Rep. Maxine Grad  
Rep. Kitty Toll  
Sen. Jane Kitchel