

Testimony in support of H.711
Main Street Alliance of Vermont
Ashley Moore, Campaigns Director



Main Street Alliance of Vermont is a statewide, small business organization committed to elevating the voices of small business owners on policy issues that support small businesses, their employees, and the communities they serve.

We are in support of H.711. We believe in the passage of legislation to ensure that crime victims are afforded equal protections against discrimination and are able to take time to participate in the criminal justice process.

MSA-VT believes it's important to extend access to this protection to employees regardless of the size of their employer. We would recommend that the committee consider changing the definition of employer to include businesses of all sizes.

Given that approximately 90% of Vermont businesses have fewer than 20 employees, and these businesses employ approximately 32% of all employed Vermonters, a significant portion of the Vermont workforce could be excluded from this protection as currently drafted. While we understand the general rationale behind employer size thresholds, we believe in the importance of universal standards to help level the playing field and minimize complexity for small business owners.

Along with my testimony, I have included a statement of support from MSA-VT Board member, and Co-Owner of Red Hen Baking Company, Eliza Cain:

I can immediately think of four employees who were victims of domestic violence while working at Red Hen Baking Company. Though their situations were different from one another, the response from Red Hen was the same: Take good care of yourself and your job is waiting for you when you are ready.

The last thing any of them needed was to worry about their income/jobs. All of them were already worried for their personal safety, attending to medical needs and getting therapy to heal from the trauma of being abused by someone whom they loved. All of them missed work for court as those dates are set and are not flexible. They scheduled appointments with doctors, attorneys and therapists around their work schedules whenever possible. None of them chose to be in the position of needing a protection order, providing testimony for a criminal case or otherwise participating in our legal system

We as employers have an opportunity to protect their jobs and support our employees in healing from a crime. A risk to ones' income further traumatizes a victim of crime. The fear of losing housing, a car, heat or electricity put unnecessary stress on an already stressed person.

Being a crime victim is not a choice, let's not treat them as though they wanted to be in the awful position they landed in. Please support H.711, additional workplace protections for crime victims.

Thank you for your work on this issue.

Ashley Moore, Main Street Alliance of Vermont