

Men's Counseling Services

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Taking Responsibility

(A Comprehensive Domestic Abuse Accountability Program)

Maida Townsend
Chair, Government Operations Committee

February 13, 2018

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 is intended to help with the costs of running domestic violence (dv) programs and fund the position of dv coordinator on Vermont. I have been running the domestic abuse accountability program (Taking Responsibility), for male perpetrators, in Windham County for the past 24 years. I believe that it is critical that we continue the work of breaking the cycle of domestic violence against women and children. I also believe that dv programming is an effective way of doing this. I have seen many men who were victims themselves of childhood violence come to realize the impact their behaviors have had on themselves and others. I have attached some quotes by men who have completed my program.

To enhance the quality of dv programs, the Vermont Statewide Standards were instituted in 2005. The mandates from the Standards have increased the costs of doing business. Co-facilitation, training, task force meetings, DOC consultation, victim contact, and lots of letter writing are but a few of the added expenses to running a quality program. Currently the only financial support comes from member fees and some minor insurance coverage (Vermont Medicaid recently cut its group reimbursement rates by over 60%). Without some source of financial support, it is difficult to see how my program can continue to sustain itself. Your support of H.689 would go a long way toward helping us to continue to break the cycle of violence and assure greater safety in our communities.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions,

Sincerely,

Bill Pelz-Walsh, LCMHC
Taking Responsibility Program Director