

Vermont Care Partners Testimony on H.145
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Vermont Care Partners strongly supports H.145, an act relating to establishing a Mental Health Crisis Response Commission, because it creates a creative opportunity for oversight and improving law enforcement interactions with people experiencing mental health crises by digging into the root causes of critical incidents. This level of analysis is essential for developing improved responses to these circumstances that will ultimately save lives.

Vermont Care Partners and representatives of designated agencies have participated in meetings of the Grennon Group which has been looking at ways to improve law enforcement interactions with people in mental health crisis. In fact, we had a very well-attended special meeting back in November with members of the Commission to share ideas and experiences from the designated agency perspective. We see this as a shared responsibility and we have a strong commitment to doing our part to prevent such incidents from occurring and also being an effective part of the response when the incidents do occur.

To be proactive, the Department of Mental Health has partnered with Vermont Care Partners and Washington County Mental Health Services to have Kristen Chandler to conduct Team Two training to bring law enforcement and mental health professionals together to learn how to better interact with people experiencing mental health crises. As noted in previous testimony, participation in the training is voluntary and some police departments have limited resources making it difficult for officers to attend full-day trainings.

Recommendations:

- The language on confidentiality should tie to the exceptions in 42 CFR Part 2 – Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Record and work within the limits of its allowed exceptions.
- Add additional representation from people with lived experience and family members of people with lived experience.