



**Testimony on H.25, H.27, H.74
Sexual Violence related bills
House Committee on Judiciary
February 2, 2017**

**Auburn Watersong
Policy Director**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you again regarding House Bills 25, 27, and 74.

H.25 Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights

Following testimony by interested parties last week, and taking into consideration the current statute and practices regarding SANE kit payment, the Vermont Network would like to propose amendments to H. 25 as attached.

H. 27 Limitations of Prosecutions for Certain Crimes

As stated in our testimony last week, Vermont currently has a **6 year statute of limitations** for sexual assault and sexual assault of a vulnerable adult, a 40 year statute of limitations for offenses alleged to have been committed against a child under 18 years of age, and no statute of limitations for aggravated sexual assault.

Experiencing a traumatic event such as a sexual assault has significant impact on the brain and memory and it can take years, even decades, for sexual assault victims to be ready to engage with the legal system.

Sexual assaults can be some of the most challenging cases to investigate, charge and prosecute. Unlike other crimes, there exists a culture of shame related to sexual assault, and the outcomes of reporting are varied. For these reasons, many victims choose not to immediately report their crimes to law enforcement.

The Vermont Network supports the elimination of the statutes of limitation for sexual assault. It may be a small fix, but for the women and men who find the courage to speak after years of silence and fear, it could be everything.

The Network continues to strongly support *the inclusion of "sexual abuse of a vulnerable adult" in section § 4501 (a).*

H. 74 Nonconsensual Sexual Conduct:

As stated in previous testimony, the Network supports the creation of a new sexual assault misdemeanor crime. It is critical that the statute be current, clear and include non-consensual touch and exposing. Having heard testimony and concerns expressed last week, the Network proposes the attached revisions to H.74 as introduced.