

Criminal history record fee exemption 2/4/20 JOAN GREENE

Judiciary Committee
House of Representatives
State of Vermont

Testimony in support of House Bill 495 (sponsor Dan Noyes, Lamoille-2)

Dear Committee Members:

Good afternoon. I am Joan Greene from Hyde Park, Lamoille County. I am the Vice President of Lamoille Neighbors, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization launched on April 1, 2019. Our goal is to help seniors minimize isolation and maximize independence and involvement in their community. We are made up of members and volunteers dedicated to enhancing the well-being of older Vermonters by helping them continue to live in their own homes. Our members are part of the "forgotten middle", the middle income group of older Vermonters. Services to our members are provided by vetted volunteers, who are the most important part of our organization. They provide transportation to appointments, events and shopping. They help with household tasks such as changing smoke detector batteries, installing curtain rods, sewing on a button, provide meals post-surgery, setting up a new phone, tv or tablet, running errands to the post office or library, and performing friendly visits, to name some of the services. We assist with little tasks that become more difficult as one ages. We also offer ongoing educational, cultural and social events. Some events are for members only, like films, potluck suppers, music sessions, etc. Others are open to the public, such as speakers like former Governor Madeline Kunin and V.P.R. reporter, Bob Kinzel.

Lamoille Neighbors has limited resources generated by member fees, which must cover liability insurance, website software, a part-time employee's salary and taxes, office supplies, scholarships for those unable to pay membership fees, publicity, printing and vetting fees. We perform an online background check on each volunteer through VCIC (Vermont Crime Information Center). This costs \$30 per volunteer. For an organization with limited resources built on volunteers providing services, the vetting fee is a large expense. Many states across the country do not charge a vetting fee to nonprofit organizations for their volunteers.

We encourage the committee to consider legislation which would exempt nonprofit organizations from the VCIC background check fee, when the services of the organization target groups of concern to the state, such as older Vermonters.