



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MEMORANDUM

To: Kitty Toll, Chair of Appropriations Committee
From: Maxine Grad, Chair of Judiciary Committee
Date: February 21, 2020
Subject: Budget Recommendations

In preparing our response, our Committee reviewed the House Judiciary Committee's top priorities which include the following:

- Creating a Fair and Balanced Justice System in Vermont that includes the importance of protecting Vermonters' constitutional right of access to justice. It is a critical part of creating a balanced justice system.
- Geographic Justice.
- Use of evidence-based policies and programs.

Based on the above priorities, the House Judiciary Committee has the following recommendations:

- Increase access to legal resources statewide for people without the ability to hire an attorney, in order to create a more balanced justice system.
 - **Towards this end we recommend appropriating/increasing funds for the Vermont Access to Justice Coalition, which would result in more legal resources for the many people who cannot afford an attorney. This increased access would provide additional capacity through Legal Aid services, the law-line, specialized immigration services and resources and the VLS Immigration clinic, as well as other law clinics. Similarly, the proposed Costello Courthouse center will be a useful resource.**
- In order to achieve more geographic justice, we recommend **expanding access to specialized treatment courts and other pre-conviction and pre-trial diversion program and off ramps such as restorative and alternative justice programs.**
- As part of a fair and balanced justice system, another geographic justice issue leads us to recommend **providing increased funding to the programs of the Vt. Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence in order to maintain and increase resources for more victims to have immediate access to options to increase victims' (and their children's) safety.**

Given the priority of implementing evidence-based policies, practices, and programming, **we recommend that the Judiciary receive the funds to add a full time (perhaps as a temporary employee to start) evidence-based policy director for the judicial branch.**

- **We believe that to truly have access to justice, our courts must be safe and secured.**