



VERMONT
NETWORK

3/20/19

**House Committee on Ways and Means
Memo on H.107**

Thank you for taking up this important bill and for all the thoughtful conversation the committee has been having over the last several weeks.

As Vermont's leading voice on domestic and sexual violence, the Vermont Network is committed to creating a world where all people can thrive and victims and survivors have their needs met. The paid family and medical leave program outlined in H.107 will provide greater health and safety for families, individuals and communities in Vermont. We support the bill as it was voted out of the House General, Housing and Military affairs committee and urge the committee to vote out a bill that keeps a strong, publically administered program.

Maintaining wage replacement at 80% or higher for those earning less than double the livable wage will be a key factor in ensuring that those with the lowest incomes are able to utilize this program. Ninety-nine percent of survivors of domestic violence have also experienced financial abuse. This type of abuse includes limiting a survivor's ability to save, establish credit, or maintain employment. Even years after leaving an abusive relationship, a survivor may not have the financial ability to take a necessary leave from work, unless they have access to a significant portion of their wages. Funding the program through both employer and employee contributions will also help to ensure equity and make the program affordable for even the lowest paid workers.

Domestic violence and sexual assault can have profound economic effects on victims and survivors in other ways as well. The physical aspects of violence often result in significant medical costs and time off from work. A statewide program that provided access to paid medical leave for employees in the case of their own serious illness, would help to provide survivors the time to seek inpatient care for physical or mental health conditions that result from violence. We are excited to see that the committee is committed to keeping this benefit in the program and feel as though it will have significant impact on survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

The Vermont Network Against Sexual and Domestic Violence is looking forward to Vermont continuing on the path to implement such a program to help make our communities, families, and businesses healthier and more economically secure so that current and future generations can thrive.

Thank you again for your consideration of this important bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Kara Casey
Director of Economic Empowerment
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence