



H. 8 – An Act Related to Voyeurism
Sarah Robinson, Deputy Director
House Judiciary Committee – February 26th, 2020

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is Vermont’s leading voice on domestic and sexual violence in Vermont. We represent 15 Member Organizations throughout the state which provide advocacy and support to victims of domestic and sexual violence. Together, these organizations serve every town in Vermont. In 2019, Vermont Network Member Organizations helped 8,760 individuals and reached over 12,000 youth through prevention programming in schools and other settings throughout our state.

The Vermont Network supports the intent of H. 8, An Act Related to Voyeurism. Voyeurism is a form of sexual violence that is often overlooked, yet has deep and lasting impacts on victims. By its very nature, voyeurism is non-consensual and is a violation of a victim’s privacy and autonomy. Voyeurism which includes recordings or images pose additional stresses on victims, causing concern as to whether or not those images have been shared or distributed to others.

Voyeurism always includes a power imbalance - but when voyeurism is committed by an adult against a minor, this imbalance is even more pronounced. There have been several significant cases of voyeurism by an adult against minors in the past several years in Vermont. These cases include a massage therapist who was secretly recording his clients in various states of undress – including minors. There have also been several prominent cases of adults in positions of power and authority, including a superintendent and a teacher making non-consensual recordings of adolescent girls.

The Vermont Network supports the intention of H. 8 to ensure that those who perpetrate voyeurism against minors are help accountable. However, we do not believe it is appropriate for any enhanced penalties that may result from this legislation be used to prosecute voyeurism in which both the victim and perpetrator are minors. We believe the language of the bill ought to reflect that the proposed enhanced penalties apply only to adults who perpetrate voyeurism against minors.