



H.19 - Senate Judiciary Committee: Sexual Exploitation of a Person in Law Enforcement Custody

Sarah Robinson, Deputy Director

March 19th, 2019

Thank you for your invitation to testify on H.19. The Vermont Network strongly supports this important piece of legislation. Victims of domestic and sexual violence often rely on law enforcement to help provide critical safety. ***It is essential that citizens at large – especially victims of crime – have full confidence that law enforcement officers act in accordance with the highest standards of their profession, and that Vermont ensures that persons acting with power and authority are held accountable when that power is used to facilitate sexual exploitation.***

The Vermont Network's Legislative Committee has carefully considered the need for this bill, and we have reviewed the current language with key stakeholders. We are particularly pleased that this proposal provides protection; not only for those who may be arrested or in custody, but also for those who are detained. It acknowledges the authority that is held by an officer, even when an individual is detained, but not under arrest. ***It is not possible to voluntarily consent to sex while detained or under any other sort of custody.*** The language found in H.19 also mirrors language related to sexual exploitation and correctional officers in Vermont statute (13 V.S.A. § 3257), as established and supported by the Network in 2005.

The law enforcement community in Vermont has worked diligently and collaboratively over many years with advocates to improve law enforcement response to victims of domestic and sexual violence. H. 19 is another effort in this proud tradition. The Vermont Network supports H.19 as written.