



H. 511: Statutes of Limitations on Various Crimes
Senate Judiciary Committee
Sarah Robinson, Deputy Director
March 29, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Committee's consideration of changes to various statutes of limitations on criminal offenses. The Vermont Network is the leading voice on domestic and sexual violence in Vermont and works to promote policies that support victims and survivors of violence to thrive and live lives free from violence. On behalf of our members and the victims they serve, the Vermont Network strongly supports H. 511.

H. 511 aligns and expands the statutes of limitations on various criminal offenses. Expanding statutes of limitations on crimes expands victims' ability to seek healing and justice. Many victims – especially victims of crimes which are sexual in nature – experience significant barriers to reporting their crimes. Longer statutes of limitations are trauma-informed in that they provide victims with more choice, and the ability to come forward on their own terms.

We are especially supportive of the proposed elimination of statutes of limitations on various crimes pertaining to sexual abuse of minors and other vulnerable persons. Sexual offenses against minors and vulnerable persons are among the hardest crimes to investigate and prosecute. They are often unreported - and when victims do choose to report them, it is often after significant delay. In the case of child victims of sexual assault, victims may also fear the outcomes of reporting their crime. According to the National Institute of Justice, among children who are sexually abused, three-quarters of child victims are abused by someone who is well-known to them.¹ Despite these barriers to reporting, research indicates that false reports of sexual assault to law enforcement are rare. It is estimated that less than 10% of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement are false².

Thank you for your time and attention to the statutes of limitations for various criminal offenses and for all of your work to create pathways to justice for victims.

¹ Child and Adolescent Victimization in America: Prevalence and Implications, National Institute of Justice

² https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Overview_False-Reporting.pdf