

Peggy Delaney

Subject: FW: Urgent concern about H 512

From: "Maggie Cassidy" <mcassidy@sover.net>
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2019 at 3:33:49 PM
To: "Richard Sears" <RSEARS@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: Urgent concern about H 512

Hello,

Just today I became aware that the Senate Judiciary Committee is considering H512, passed by the House on March 14. While the bill may make substantive changes in the Vermont judiciary, much of it seems aimed at renaming Guardians Ad Litem "court appointed special advocates." As you probably know, "court appointed special advocates" are defined, trained, remunerated (in some locations) and deployed differently in every state, while neither the term nor its acronym, CASA, are familiar in Vermont. I am a Guardian Ad Litem in Windham County, and can tell you with confidence that the title has specific meaning and value among Vermonters — both professionals, in schools and social-service agencies — and regular citizens who have benefited from the neutral stance and commitment of Guardians in often difficult and contentious situations. Changing the name of that role would throw away the respect and goodwill attached to the current title.

In the last few years I have worked hard — as an individual, not under the auspices of the Guardian Ad Litem program — to publicize that volunteer role both locally (via the Brattleboro *Reformer* [in 2016](#), [in 2017](#) and [in 2018](#), and statewide, in [a commentary on Vermont Public Radio](#), to try to help recruit new volunteers to address the critical shortage of Guardians Ad Litem across the state. That effort, and others, will be lost if H 512 is passed into law as written, and attaching meaning and value to the new title in the eyes of the public could take years. As an individual citizen, not claiming to represent the Guardian Ad Litem, I urge you to help defeat the law, or amend it to keep the title Guardian Ad Litem.

Thank you very much for your attention. I am sending a version of this letter to all the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Best, Maggie Cassidy