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H.49

Introduced by Representatives Townsend of South Burlington, Cordes of  
Lincoln, James of Manchester, Killacky of South Burlington,  
Kornheiser of Brattleboro, Leffler of Enosburgh, McCullough  
of Williston, Mrowicki of Putney, Vyhovsky of Essex, White of  
Hartford, and Yacovone of Morristown

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Domestic relations; abuse prevention; psychological abuse

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to allow a  
person to obtain a relief from abuse order against a family or household  
member based upon psychological abuse.

An act relating to including psychological abuse as the basis for obtaining a  
civil abuse protection order

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) According to the report, Intimate Partner Violence in the United  
States, issued by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 95 percent of men who physically  
2 abuse their intimate partners also psychologically abuse them.

3 (2) Seven out of 10 psychologically abused women display symptoms of  
4 post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, or both, with psychological abuse  
5 being a greater predictor of post-traumatic stress disorder than physical abuse.

6 (3) Women experiencing psychological abuse are significantly more  
7 likely to report poor physical and mental health and to have more than five  
8 physician visits in a year.

9 Sec. 2. 15 V.S.A. § 1101 is amended to read:

10 § 1101. DEFINITIONS

11 The following words as used in this chapter shall have the following  
12 meanings:

13 (1) “Abuse” means the occurrence of one or more of the following acts  
14 between family or household members:

15 (A) Attempting to cause or causing physical harm.

16 (B) Placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm.

17 (C) Abuse to children as defined in 33 V.S.A. chapter 49,  
18 subchapter 2.

19 (D) Stalking as defined in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(6).

20 (E) Sexual assault as defined in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(5).

21 (F) Psychological abuse.

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(6) “Psychological abuse” means the willful infliction of significant

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mental suffering or distress that may, but does not necessarily, require medical

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or other professional treatment or counseling.

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Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

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This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.