



H. 329 – An act relating to amending the prohibitions against discrimination

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House General, Housing and Military Affairs – March 23, 2022

Thank you for taking up H. 329 today, an act relating to amending the prohibitions against discrimination. We are grateful for the Committee's continued work on this bill.

As a matter of policy, the Vermont Network remains strongly supportive of the overall purpose of H. 329 – including the proposed changes to the Fair Employment Practices Act, the Fair Housing Act as well as the changes to public accommodations. After last week's testimony, the Vermont Network met with a representative of the VSBA, VSA, VPA and VSBIT to discuss a possible path forward. These conversations were helpful in that they clarified areas of alignment and disagreement.

On behalf of the Vermont Network, National Association of Social Workers VT, the Human Rights Commission and Vermont Legal Aid, we would like to propose the following compromise framework:

- Remove the language changing the definition of harassment as applicable to public accommodations. Clarify the changes in Title 9 to apply narrowly to housing only, not to other sites of public accommodations.
- Retain the proposed amendment to expand the statute of limitations for any claims brought under either the Unlawful Employment Practices Act or the Public Accommodations Act to 6 years.

If the Committee decided to pursue these changes, it will require careful drafting to ensure that an amendment includes language that permits the Fair Housing Act to move forward with the Fair Employment Practices Act without any direct or indirect impact on the Public Accommodations Act and we are happy to partner with the Committee or legislative counsel to achieve this aim.