

Dear Chair Hooper,

Thank you and your committee for giving the House Judiciary the opportunity to weigh in on Sec. 201 Justice System Investments as proposed by the Senate and Senate Proposal of amendment H.4392021.

After the House Judiciary took testimony and discussed the issues, our Committee took a vote 10-0-1 to recommend the following to the House Appropriations Committee.

We support Sec. G.201 (a)(1) (A) and (B). We are not taking a position on (C) since it is another committee's jurisdiction. We support sections (2), (3) and Section (4) in 4392021.

Additionally, we understand that The Vermont Network and the 15 Member Organizations who are Vermont's providers of direct services to victims of domestic and sexual violence across the state have two main sources of state funding – the General Fund and the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund.

While not part of G.201 and 4392021, after listening to testimony, we recommend:

1. Making the Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Special Fund shortfall whole for FY21 and FY22. The DV/SV Special Fund established in 2008, is set forth in 13 V.S.A. § 5360 and administered by the Vermont Center for Crime Victims Services. We understand that the request represents a 0% increase in funding through the Special Fund because it is only filling a current deficit and anticipated shortfall.

2. Adequately funding Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence programs; It should be noted that our Committee was greatly concerned to learn that these programs have not received an increase in funding for the past 13 years, since 2008. Given the increase in domestic violence and the increased costs of doing business, we strongly support House Appropriations addressing adequately funding this important system that provides so many critical services to people throughout the state, including children and families. It is for this reason, we hope that next session, your committee look at addressing the true cost of providing these services, and find a way to fund the costs, as too often, we assume that nonprofits will just find the money.

Best,

Maxine

Maxine Grad, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
Vermont General Assembly