

House Committee on Corrections and Institutions
Earned Good Time
Chris Fenno, Executive Director
March 30, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony on this bill. One of the Center's statutory responsibilities is to advocate for the rights and needs of Vermonters who have been hurt or harmed by crime and it is in that context that the Center supports the exceptions this legislation would provide for offenders of violent crimes convicted prior to the passage of the earned time.

The carve out being proposing would disqualify a person from earning time off their sentence:

- murder in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2301;
- voluntary manslaughter in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2304;
- kidnapping in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2405;
- lewd and lascivious conduct with a child in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2602;
- sexual assault in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 3252(a) or (b);
- aggravated sexual assault in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 3253;
- aggravated sexual assault of a child in violation of 13 V.S.A.

A person convicted prior this beginning should not be able to have their sentence reduced by earning time off. The victims of these crimes are never able to reduce the trauma they have endured. It is important that victims of these crimes are able to have justice serve them. Vermont needs to support victims of these crimes and ensure that the perpetrators serve their sentence as it was ordered at sentencing.

The issue of notification continues to be problematic. It is because the method of notification, VANS, will not reach all victims. Last fall, getting this information via a text, email, or robocall was traumatizing to victims and families and they had few answers to their questions. There needs to be a comprehensive plan to update and notify victims personally and not through VANS. This may take additional personnel.

I encourage this Committee to support the changes that S.18 provides. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

