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February 3, 2022

Vermont Legislature
House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs

Re: H. 96 - An act relating to creating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Development Task Force

On behalf of Disability Rights Vermont (DRVT), the federally authorized disability protection and advocacy system in Vermont pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 10801 et seq., and the Mental Health Care Ombudsman for the State of Vermont pursuant to 18 V.S. A. §7259, I submit the following written testimony expressing concern that disability is not included in this Task Force.

This concern exists because if the purpose is “to examine and begin the process of dismantling institutional, structural, and systemic discrimination in Vermont”, how can that not include disability? There are a number of ways in which people are discriminated against, treated as the other, marginalized, and deprived opportunities. It can be blatant discrimination and bias, but often it is inadvertent.

Historically, and still, people with disabilities are disproportionately denied opportunities, are labeled the other, and mistreated. This has occurred through eugenics, institutionalization and locking people up, denial of accommodations, and bias. There are still structural inequalities that deny people with disabilities equal treatment and opportunities. People with disabilities still experience excessive institutionalization. <https://disabilityrightsvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DRVT-Olmstead-Report.pdf>

Addressing institutional, structural, and systemic discrimination requires a holistic approach to understanding the issues, the intersectionality, and including all the stakeholders. We encourage this Committee to actively seek input on this bill to address these structural barriers to equity from Vermonters with disabilities. Hear their stories

Defending and Advancing the rights of people with disabilities.

Email at info@DisabilityRightsVT.org,

On the web: www.disabilityrightsvt.org

and experiences regarding the barriers to equity in their lives. Hear their ideas on how we as a state can move forward.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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