

Dear Members of the House Human Services Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Vermont Children's Alliance and our 13 member Child's Advocacy Centers (CACs) which exist throughout our state, and partner directly with Vermont's Special Investigation Units to ensure a coordinated, holistic response to children who have been abused and are thrust in to the criminal justice system as a result. We strongly support H.265, and are grateful to this Committee for the work you have done to provide a thoughtful and important approach to strengthening Vermont's ability to support our children and those who care for them.

Children's Advocacy Centers are child-focused programs in which representatives from many disciplines, including law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy, and child advocacy, work together to conduct interviews and make team decisions about investigation, treatment, management and prosecution of child abuse cases. Generally, a CAC is a neutral area and is designed specifically to create a feeling of safety and security for the children involved. The Vermont Children's Alliance and our member CACs are also a member of the Vermont Citizen's Advisory Board (VCAB).

The Bill as written is entirely in step with the vision we have and share for such an Office – allowing for a voice for children, youth and families that will address systemic issues while serving as an avenue for redress and reform when needed.

We thank you again for the time and energy this Committee have placed into moving a much needed piece of the puzzle forward. Should you be interested in learning more about our position or the important work CACs are doing everyday in your communities, we are always available. Best, Jenn

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"Every child, every time."