



H. 87 Testimony

Sarah Robinson, Deputy Director

House Judiciary Committee – February 10, 2021

Thank you for the invitation to provide brief written testimony on H. 87. The Vermont Network supports the work of the Sentencing Commission, and the efforts of the General Assembly to clearly classify criminal offenses. We share a strong commitment to reducing disparities within the criminal legal system, including in sentencing, and applaud the work of the General Assembly towards this end.

The Vermont Network does not have any policy concerns with the reclassification of crimes outlined in H. 87. However, we would like to highlight a potential unintended consequence of this bill and related legislation. Historically, Vermont has relied on criminal fines and fees as a primary revenue source to fund victim services. As policymakers consider reclassifying criminal offenses, including sentences and fines, we would urge the General Assembly to undertake an analysis of the impact of changes to fines and fees on victim services. We believe that policymakers and stakeholders would benefit from a study committee to examine this issue, which would include the analysis of the Joint Fiscal Office and data provided by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services. This information could assist in quantifying the short- and long-term impact of important criminal justice reform efforts on victim services and identify alternative revenue sources to ensure that these services remain available across Vermont. The Vermont Network would be glad to assist in these efforts.