

**Senate Judiciary Committee
Earned Good Time
Chris Fenno, Executive Director
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on proposed new language in this important legislation. Last January, I did offer testimony supporting including current incarcerated individuals being able to earn good time. In retrospect, I did not fully see the unintended consequences this would have for victims and their families, especially for extremely violent crimes. As the Committee is well-aware, 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.

The new language is proposing 8 crimes that would disqualify a person from earning good time. The very name "earned good time" can trigger a victim by suggesting that the person that committed a heinous crime could be incarcerated and somehow earn good time. It is important that victims of these crimes be able to have justice serve them. Vermont needs to support victims of these crimes and ensure that the perpetrators serve their sentence.

The issue of notification continues to be problematic. It is because of the method of notification, VANS, that so many were upset. 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 have heard from a number of families. It is because of their reaching out to me that I was able to see that exceptions need to be made. I believe that the committee would also benefit from hearing their experiences and reasoning behind wanting exceptions.

We encourage this Committee to make these exceptions. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

