



H.22 An Act Relating to Sexual Exploitation of a Person who is being Investigated by Law Enforcement

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The Vermont Network supports the language in H.22, now included in the Miscellaneous Judiciary Bill. It is imperative that we ensure that law enforcement officers act in accordance with the highest standards of their profession, and that Vermont ensures that persons acting with power and authority are held accountable when that power is used to facilitate sexual exploitation.

In 2019, we spoke in support of the legislation prohibiting law enforcement from engaging in sexual acts with a person whom the officer is detaining, arresting, or otherwise holding in custody or who the officer knows is being detained, arrested, or otherwise held in custody by another law enforcement officer. Adding a person who an officer is investigating or who knows is being investigated makes sense.

I want to acknowledge and support the testimony that has already been offered that reflects on the tactics that have been used by law enforcement nationally to investigate prostitution and human trafficking. These tactics are exploitative and perpetrate sexual harm on some of Vermont's most vulnerable people. For this reason, we also support adding victims and confidential informants to the list of persons with whom a law enforcement officer is prohibited from engaging in sexual conduct.

We also support the language that carves out pre-existing consensual sexual relationships, as well as the committee's decision to take the "should have known" language out of the bill.