

**RE: H.89: An act relating to civil and criminal procedures concerning legally protected health care activity**

Dear Chairman LaLonde and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Lynn Stanley, and I am the Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers Vermont Chapter (NASW VT). I am writing to express our support for H.89: an act relating to the criminal and civil procedures pertaining to legally protected health care activity. This bill would ensure that no person is discriminated against on the basis of their gender, identity, and health care needs.

Leading medical associations and evidence points to the imperative need for comprehensive services for reproductive health, which includes access to contraception and abortion, as well as gender-affirming care. Currently, multiple states around the nation have enacted abortion bans and have limited other procedures and services relating to reproductive health. This is a direct and unabashed violation of human rights, which the NASW actively strives towards advancing. Access to education and to comprehensive, developmentally appropriate care is especially crucial for transgender youth. Additionally, the legal consequences faced by medical and health practitioners, including social workers, in such states is draconian in strictness and severity, including exacerbated amounts of fines and prison time. Not only will passing H. 89 increase social justice and equity, but it will also promote the growing and established evidence-practice bridge between mental health and modern medicine, which holds the potential to save lives.

The state of Vermont has remained steadfast in their support to protect the reproductive rights of patients and the gender-affirming practices of medical and healthcare practitioners. H. 89 will strengthen the existing provisions while providing essential expansions for the protection of transgender youth, families, and the evidence-based practices of providers. We thank you for your commitment to this issue and creating long-lasting, positive change for members of Vermont communities.

Respectfully submitted,

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