



**H. 89– An Act Relating to Civil and Criminal Procedures Concerning
Legally Protected Health Care Activity
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Thank you for the invitation to speak with the committee today in support of H. 89. As Vermont’s leading voice on domestic and sexual violence, the Vermont Network works to promote policies that support victims and survivors of violence to thrive and live lives free from violence. We also represent the 15 member organizations of the Vermont Network, one of which is the Pride Center SafeSpace Anti-Violence program which provides direct support to LGBTQIA+ survivors.

The Vermont Network’s organizational mission is to uproot the causes of violence and build a world free of oppression where actions, beliefs, and systems support all people to thrive. H. 89 creates needed protections against violence so that all in our communities may thrive. Victims and survivors need bodily autonomy, especially as it relates to their medical care. Gender-affirming and reproductive care is essential healthcare and those who receive it and provide it need to be allowed to do so without the threat of violence.

Essential Medical Care

We strongly support explicitly adding gender-affirming care as legally protected health care activity. Estimates show that over 3,000 transgender individuals live in Vermont.ⁱ These individuals are among the most vulnerable to harassment, victimization and violence. Trans individuals who receive gender-affirming healthcare are able to live their lives in alignment with their true selves. We know that people who live happier, healthier lives are less vulnerable to violence and harassment, including sexual violence and trafficking. Gender-affirming healthcare is essential medical care and we need to make sure that it remains available to all who need it.

Address Confidentiality Program

The Secretary of State’s office has long housed the state’s address confidentiality program established in 15 V.S.A. § 1150-1160 called the Safe At Home program. This program is currently available for all victims of domestic and sexual violence. Victims apply through the Secretary’s Office and then have four years of address protection with the option to reapply. This is a valuable protection for individuals to keep the location of their home secure from those who may harm them. It provides survivors who are part of the program with the sense of safety that everyone should be able to experience. We fully support the expansion of this program to include healthcare workers providing essential care to their communities.

ⁱ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/subpopulations/transgender-people/>