



H.931, Miscellaneous Education Bill – Section 5 & Section 6
Charlie Gliserman, Policy Director
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Section 5 and Section 6 of H.931, the miscellaneous education bill.

Section 5 – Intercollegiate Sexual Harm Prevention Council

The Intercollegiate Sexual Harm Prevention Council was established in statute in 2021 to coordinate a statewide response to campus sexual harm across Vermont's institutions of higher education.

For several years, the Council's work was supported by small, one-time appropriations that funded administrative assistance and provided stipends for members who were not otherwise compensated for their participation, including student representatives. In FY26, the General Assembly did not allocate any resources to support the Council. Additional context is included in a joint proposal from the University of Vermont and the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, submitted as written testimony.

The changes in Section 5 respond to this funding gap and the Council's evolving needs. These changes reestablish the Council to reflect its current capacity without an appropriation and also reaffirm its important purpose as an information-sharing forum to improve prevention of, and responses to, sexual violence on Vermont campuses.

Section 6 – Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying Advisory Council

The Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying Advisory Council was established in statute in 2012 and is charged with "reviewing and coordinating school and statewide activities on preventing and responding to harassment, hazing, and bullying."

In its current form, the Council has faced significant challenges which have limited its ability to provide needed guidance to students, educators, and schools. These challenges have plagued the Council for many years. The Council has been inactive for extended periods. Most recently, the Council has repeatedly struggled to reach a quorum at meetings. It is currently advising the Agency on an overdue and needed update of Vermont HHB model policy, which hasn't been updated since 2016.

Hazing, harassment, and bullying can deeply affect a student's safety, health, and academic success. To best serve youth, schools need support - like evidence-based model policies, strategies, and resources - to prevent and address this harm. With strengthened membership and clearer direction, the Council will serve as a more effective partner to the Agency of Education as it undertakes new HHB initiatives.

The proposed revisions to the HHB Council will strengthen its effectiveness by:

- Revising its charge to provide better direction for its work, including more regular reviews of HHB model policy for schools. Responses to HHB evolve over time as best practices change. Reviews of Vermont's model policy must occur regularly.
- Revising its membership to be representative of people impacted by HHB issues.

- Strengthening its relationship with the legislature with new hearing and reporting requirements.

Proposed Additions to Council Membership

Based on prior committee discussions, I wanted to offer a brief rationale for each proposed new member. Currently, the Council has a very limited membership. The proposed additions to Council membership below each bring unique and vital perspective to HHB in schools to advise the Agency.

Two designated employees under the HHB policy, appointed by the Secretary of Education

While Senate Education was reviewing potential revisions to the HHB Council we worked with the Agency to produce compromise language for this section, which is the language before the committee. One of the Agency's recommended changes was adding these members to the Council to provide an on-the-ground perspective on HHB policy implementation. We were happy to support their request.

A member appointed by the Vermont Educational Equity Collective

The Vermont Educational Equity Collective consists of school-based professionals who provide support and professional development on equity issues in schools. Members have expertise in creating supportive learning environments, and one regularly attends Council meetings to observe as a member of the public.

A school social worker, appointed by the National Association of Social Workers–Vermont Chapter.

School social workers engage with students and families to reduce barriers that students face in accessing their education, including HHB.

A member appointed by the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights

This coalition of disability rights organizations brings a vital perspective on supporting students with disabilities and appropriately addressing situations in which students with disabilities may cause harm. The coalition represents a consortium of organizations who provide direct advocacy, legal services, and training, and can advise on differentiated approaches and equitable practices.

Two student members, appointed by:

- the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network
- Outright Vermont

Students are those most directly impacted by HHB policies and practices. Their insight is essential for understanding how policies function in practice, how communication reaches students, and whether interventions are effective. Both organizations have a strong record of supporting youth leadership and participating in statewide bodies.

A member appointed by the Office of Racial Equity and a member appointed by the Commission on Women

These state offices bring deep expertise in racial and gender equity, respectively, conduct research and policy analysis, and have undertaken significant work related to youth and schools in their specialized areas. As the Agency renews its focus on HHB data collection and analysis, these state offices would be valuable assets.

A member, appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

The Vermont Network, and its 14 member organizations, provide a variety of supports to youth survivors of gender-based harassment, dating violence, and sexual violence. Our member programs manage youth support and violence prevention programs across the state, many of which include strong partnerships with local schools. Our pro bono legal clinic provides services to students who experience harassment and violence at school; another team manages healthy youth initiatives.

A parent or caregiver member, appointed by the Vermont Family Network

Parents and caregivers play a significant role as supporters and advocates for their children and as consumers of school-district policies. The Vermont Family Network brings extensive experience supporting families - particularly those with children who have disabilities or special health needs - and is well positioned to identify a representative who can provide a parent perspective on these issues.

The revisions in this section are a small, but meaningful, step forward in improving student safety and support in Vermont schools. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.