

**S.239 The Child Abuse and Neglect Working Group
Vermont School Counselors Association
House Human Services Committee – April 8, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.239. This bill presents an important opportunity to strengthen how Vermont supports students through a coordinated, statewide approach. It is a meaningful step toward strengthening student support systems in Vermont.

We would like to request that you consider *including a School Counselor in the list of stakeholders with which the Working Group will consult*. This will help to ensure that the policy development will include input from professionals with direct expertise in student mental health, academic planning, and family engagement.

School counselors are essential to the success, safety, and well-being of Vermont students. They support academic achievement, college and career readiness, and—critically—student mental health. They are often the first trusted adults students turn to when facing anxiety, depression, trauma, family instability, and school disengagement.

For this work to be effective, it must include input from the professionals who are most directly engaged in addressing these challenges every day.

School counselors bring unique, essential expertise in:

- Mental health support and early identification
- Family engagement and communication
- Academic and career planning
- Systems-level coordination and implementation
- Direct work with students, while also collaborating with educators, families, and community partners, giving them a comprehensive perspective on student needs and school systems.

Including VTSCA will help ensure that:

- Policies are grounded in real school-based practice
- Recommendations reflect student-centered, developmentally appropriate approaches
- Implementation is practical, sustainable, and effective across districts
- With 119 school districts across Vermont, consistent and informed guidance is essential. School counselors offer a statewide perspective rooted in direct service to students.

Proposed Amendment

Sec. 1. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING WORKING GROUP

- (c) In conducting its work, the Working Group shall consult with stakeholders, including (9) A School Counselor appointed by the Vermont School Counselors Association.