

To: House Committee Human Services
Date: April 8, 2026
Subject: S. 239. An act relating to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Working Group
From: Jay Nichols, Senior Executive Director Vermont Principals' Association

For the record, Jay Nichols, Senior Executive Director the Vermont Principals' Association.

In terms of the bill S. 239 that passed the Senate, my testimony today is about protecting children/students in our schools and making sure school employees know what they can and cannot do.

Currently T. 33§ 4911 lists under purpose six items

1. Protect children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through abuse or neglect;
2. Strengthen the family and make the home safe for children whenever possible by enhancing the parental capacity for good child care;
3. Provide a temporary or permanent nurturing and safe environment for children when necessary; and for these purposes require the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect, an assessment or investigation of such reports and provision of services, when needed, to such child and family;
4. Establish a range of responses to child abuse and neglect that take into account different degrees of child abuse or neglect and that recognize that child offenders should be treated differently from adults;
5. Establish a tiered child protection registry that balances the need to protect children and the potential employment consequences of a

registry record for a person's conduct that is substantiated for child abuse and neglect; and

6. Ensure that in the Department for Children and Families' efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect, the Department also ensures that investigations are thorough, unbiased, based on accurate and reliable information weighed against other supporting or conflicting information, and adhere to due process requirements.

I share the above purpose items because I want to make it clear that the Vermont Principals' Association understands that the work of the folks at the Department of Children and Families extends way beyond what happens in, and what is reported to, school officials. That said, we know our members and the staff they supervise play a key role in child welfare issues.

As mandatory reporters, and more importantly, as adults who care deeply for the children they serve, our members and the staff they supervise recognize that our schools are key components of any reporting of potential child abuse and/or neglect. We believe input from our members could be invaluable to the Working Group and certainly is something the Vermont Principals' Association would like to testify on once the working group makes any recommendations that might impact how schools interact with issues around reporting of child abuse and neglect concerns.

Finally, seeking to be part of the solution to any of this meaningful work, the VPA would be willing to name a representative to the Working Group should the Human Services Committee desire to make that addition to the composition of the Working Group.



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Respectfully submitted,

Jay Nichols