

Good afternoon. I'm Anna Nasset of Waitsfield, Vermont. Thank you for hearing my testimony today on **H.223, an act relating to stalking through the use of tracking technology.**

I have resided in Waitsfield, Vermont for nine years after moving from Washington State. Since 2017, I have worked to educate myself and become involved in victims' rights and services through a myriad of ways. I attended the Vermont Victims' Assistance Academy and after that found myself in the unique position of being asked to speak about the crime of stalking, violence prevention, and trauma-informed practices all over the world. I train law enforcement, military, college campuses, federal and state agencies, and communities. I partner regularly with SPARC (Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center of AEquitas and have had the opportunity to work with the OVW (Office on Violence Against Women), DOJ, OVC (Office for Victims of Crime) and the White House in 2023 and 2024. Additionally, I am a member of ATAP (Association of Threat Assessment Professionals) and the New York Cyber Abuse Task Force. I also serve on the board of EVAWI (End Violence Against Women Intl.), VINELink Advisory Council, and am the Vice President of the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce.

I share my credentials with you, so you can see me as a whole person and not for what has happened to me. What led me here is that I am a victim and survivor of stalking for the last sixteen years. The issue of tracking technology is of the utmost importance to me.

Since 2008 or 2009, though I became aware in 2011, a man named Fraser Rotchford has been stalking me. The offender is a stranger to me and a serial stalker. At the time I was living in Port Townsend, Washington where I owned an art gallery and was living my best life. The offender targeted me because he wanted to show his artwork at my gallery. I later found out he believes we are married and wants to murder me, and he had been watching me for several years prior. He began to torment me through technology, messaging, and physically following and monitoring me.

Fear of him acting on his threats impacted my every moment. He was sentenced to 364 days in jail for misdemeanor harassment and I was granted a lifetime protection order against him.

I had to close my beloved business due to his relentless behavior and, in 2016, relocated to Vermont to try to find safety. This did not happen. Despite my protection order, Mr. Rotchford began his vile stalking and communication through cyberstalking and messaging on social media. Washington State has one of the best stalking statutes in our country which aided in my fight for safety. In 2019 I returned to Washington state to testify at the trial of Mr. Rotchford. He was found guilty of aggravated felony stalking and felony cyberstalking. He was sentenced to a maximum of 10 years in prison, at the time one of the longest sentences in our country's history for stalking. One of the reasons for the successful conviction in my case is that the stalker is a stranger to me and that the crime was committed in Washington State and not Vermont. I know and have been told by professionals if the crime had happened here I would not be alive. I decided I could not be the exception we need better standards here in Vermont and throughout the country. I have used my privilege to work for change.

The terror and fear of stalking lie in not knowing what the stalker may do and in never knowing when the next strike will hit. It is psychological warfare on the victim. I spent countless nights with my phone alerting me over and over with threats and sexually explicit comments while attempting to get a few hours of sleep, then to try to rise in the morning and go to work, looking out the window, distracted, and unable to perform my work and life tasks. It is critical that survivors of technology-facilitated abuse can access the protective measures they need to lead lives free from violence.

The National Crime Victimization Survey reported in 2019 that 42% of victims experienced both in-person and technology-facilitated stalking and 42% of victims experienced solely cyberstalking. The study also showed that 1 in 7 victims experienced being tracked by electronic devices or apps.¹ I would fully expect a much larger percentage of victims would report the use of technology-facilitated stalking if the survey was done today. We have seen a sky-rocketing rise of tech-facilitated stalking. To support this assumption in 2019 SPARC (Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center (SPARC) of Aequitas) reported that an estimated 6.5-7 million people are stalked in our country each year.² SPARC redid their study and in 2022 found that an estimated 13 million people are stalked each year.³

While I was stalked by a stranger, the majority of people who are stalked, are stalked by a current or former intimate partner. According to SPARC 43% of female and 32% of male stalking victims are targeted by intimate partners. On average intimate partner stalkers pose the greatest threat to their victims. It should be noted that 76% of intimate partner femicides were preceded by stalking the year prior.⁴ The intersection of domestic violence and stalking is a grossly overlooked crossroads that if taken seriously WILL save lives. H.223 is a step in the right direction.

I hear from victims of stalking throughout this state regularly who are being monitored via their vehicles and other technology. Their stories and lack of protection keep me up at night, I feel the fear and danger they are facing. The use of vehicles in stalking as highlighted by New York Times (focusing on Mercedes and Tesla)⁵ and WIRED (focusing on Subaru)⁶ illustrates the

¹ <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/sv19.pdf>

² https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SPARC_StalkngFactSheet_2018_FINAL.pdf

³ https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SPARC_StalkngFactSheet_2018_FINAL.pdf

⁴ https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Stalking_DV_Infographic.pdf

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/31/technology/car-trackers-gps-abuse.html>

⁶ <https://www.wired.com/story/subaru-location-tracking-vulnerabilities/>

severity of this crime. H. 223 is an important act not only in the physical safety of stalking victims but also in their ability to navigate daily tasks with the slightest sense of safety, accessing groceries, work, childcare, and basic needs. Additionally, the protection of not being monitored when reporting to law enforcement, meeting with advocates, fleeing an abusive stalker, checking into housing shelter, or even using a vehicle as housing. H.223 not only helps protect the victim but also those who are in their circle and or serving to protect them.

As technology evolves, our laws must respond with new safeguards to protect survivors' safety and privacy. I ask this committee to be leaders not only in our state but in our nation and join California and New York in creating laws that allow for basic protection of not being stalked through a connected vehicle.

Time after time victims, trying to find freedom and protection from intimate partner stalking are turned away for protection orders, here in Vermont, regardless of binders full of documented horrific threats received through technology. H. 223 that will aid victims in a layer of protection and safety. Additionally, I believe the addition of 12 hours of surveillance to the course of conduct will further protect victims of stalking.

We cannot move as fast as technology, but we must create systems that support victims from stalking and abuse one small step at a time.

Thank you, committee, for hearing my testimony today. I look forward to engaging more with you on H.223, bringing in other national experts and case studies, and most importantly sharing Vermont stalking victim's voices.