



H.27 – Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.27, changes to the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission.

Nearly half of all homicides in Vermont between 1994 and 2023 were domestic violence-related. Research indicates that in 65% of domestic violence homicides, either the victim or perpetrator interacted with a criminal justice or health care professional before the event.¹ This indicates there are opportunities for our systems to better identify risk factors and prevent domestic violence homicide.

That is why nearly all states in the nation have a body like Vermont's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission. A Vermont Network representative has served on the Commission since it was created in statute in 2002. During that time, the Vermont Network has supported the Commission's vital work to track domestic violence homicide trends, conduct in-depth case reviews, and recommend systems changes to prevent future tragedies.

We're pleased to support H.27, as it will strengthen the Commission's work moving forward. H.27 would:

1. **Allow the Commission to review trends and patterns of near-fatal instances of domestic violence** in Vermont, in addition to fatal instances of domestic violence. Commissions in other states commonly review near-fatalities, as these cases offer valuable insights into opportunities for intervention and prevention of completed homicides.
2. **Enable better representation** of key stakeholders by adding new members of the Commission and directing those with appointing authority to consider diversity in their appointment. All Vermont communities are impacted by domestic violence, but they are not all impacted in the same ways. These changes will contribute new, important perspectives to the Commission and ensure its work improves systems of response for all Vermont communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with the committee today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

¹ Praxis International (2015). Risk and Lethality Assessment in the Field of Intimate Partner Violence, p.6.