



The University of Vermont Medical Center

111 Colchester Ave., Smith 240

Burlington, VT 05401

February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Walker and Members of House Transportation:

We are writing to offer our support for [H.187 An act relating to requiring the use of personal flotation devices during cold weather](#).

In 2022, the Vermont Water Safety Action Committee released a [report](#) with recommendations to improve water safety in Vermont. The report notes that, compared to surrounding states, Vermont is lacking in statewide water safety regulations and guidance. Most water laws in Vermont are related to boat safety, such as safety course requirements and personal flotation devices on board for each occupant. Only children under the age of 13 are required to wear a life jacket when boats are underway and there are no cold weather life jacket laws for anyone.

**Why do we need a cold weather life-jacket law?** Submersion in cold water can cause the body to go into shock and minimizes the time and ability for someone to self-rescue. New York has a [great brochure](#) that goes into the risk of cold water immersion in detail. Cold weather life jacket laws protect individuals from the risk of cold water immersion from fall to late spring. H.187 would require all individuals on boats, no matter their age, to wear a life jacket during the highest risk times of years. The goal is to reduce drowning from boats and other aquatic activities in fall and spring by ensuring people have more time to self-rescue or be rescued. It's a small ask with a big potential to save lives. A beneficial side effect is we hope it will raise awareness in the community that is important for all individuals to wear life jackets on boats, especially those boating with children.

Thank you for consideration of this important legislation. We would be happy to meet with your committee, answer any questions you may have and provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

*Maureen M. Johnson*

Maureen M. Johnson, CPSTI

Safe Kids Vermont Coalition President