



State of Vermont
Human Rights Commission
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Dear Chair Bongartz and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to testify to you on April 16th about H.930, an act relating to addressing and preventing chronic absenteeism. Please allow this letter to supplement my testimony.

I serve as Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission and the Chair of the Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying Prevention Advisory Council. I was very pleased to see that the latest draft of the miscellaneous education bill, H.931, includes language to revise the HHB Prevention Advisory Council. This language would expand both the membership and the duties of the Council. It represents an important step forward in ensuring that Vermont's students, administrators, and educators have the tools they need to effectively prevent and respond to hazing, harassment, and bullying in our schools. Based on my participation in the Advisory Council and the 2023 Working Group on the Prevention of Harassment and Bullying in Schools, as well as the many school trainings and harassment complaint investigations HRC has conducted in the last 5 years, I can confidently say that there is a significant need for these updates to the Advisory Council. I am hopeful that these updates will have a positive impact on Vermont schools and will support the Agency of Education in addressing this serious issue more comprehensively moving forward.

Of course, if the Committee has any further questions for me or would like additional information prior to your vote on H.931, please let me know. I thank you wholeheartedly for your commitment to the safety and well-being of all of Vermont's students.

Sincerely,

Big Hartman, Esq.
Executive Director and General Counsel
Vermont Human Rights Commission