

Bill H.657

Thank you Health and Welfare committee for your time. I am here today with Outright Vermont as a GSA(gender and sexuality alliance/gay-straight alliance) member from Otter Valley Union Highschool to speak on the bill H.657 on the side of urging this committee to pass said bill, to share the experience of those around me and to support testimony heard from the voices of Vermont children to fund the goals in the bill so they can be supported in these trying times. I fall into the category of low income housing for Addison county with my mother. As such I have been lucky enough to never have experienced homelessness and thus I can not speak directly upon this. However I have seen the direct effect of what a lack of stable housing does to a person. Because of this matter I would like to share the experience of people in my life who have dealt with the things that this bill hopes to change. A good friend of mine was kind enough to share his story with me and he told me about how as a child his family on occasion couldn't afford to pay their rent, this led to them often having to move in with his aunt while they were unhoused. He mentioned to me that he was among the lucky group that had support and when they were housed gave that very support to those who were struggling. Another example of a similar experience is that of my very own mother. I remember hearing my mother talk to my sibling and I about her childhood and she would recount that she and her family lived in an apple orchard because they were dirt poor and couldn't afford a normal living. She has a plethora of stories just like this from her childhood all torn with how poverty affected her. She also had the occasional support of her family throughout the country leading her and her family to move around. The presence of this bill at that time would have helped to aid both families in the event that he did not have this support around them. I can comfortably say as a result that no child should ever have to go through something like this to begin with, but when it does unfortunately happen there should be far better support for youth such as mentioned in **Sec. 4. 33 V.S.A. § 4908** (added to read) § 4908. UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH "it is the intent of the General Assembly to provide an unaccompanied youth with the resources necessary to obtain services and benefits that the unaccompanied youth's peers can obtain with the consent of a parent or guardian." I am extremely lucky to have had a childhood where unlike my mother and friend I didn't have to worry about housing or where I might sleep or eat the next day. With the experiences I have recounted today I strongly urged the Health and Welfare committee to pass bill H.657 so that no youth has to shoulder the burden of being unhoused with no support. Again thank you very much for your time today.