



## **Section 6 & Section 11 of H.550 – PREA Standards**

**Charlie Gliserman, Policy Director**

**April 24, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Section 6 and Section 11 of H.550. We appreciate the committee's commitment to protecting Vermonters from sexual violence in correctional facilities.

Individuals who are incarcerated experience a heightened risk for sexual abuse or misconduct. Vermont is not immune from these realities.

Protecting individuals' safety in the state's custody is a core responsibility of government. The federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was created to further that principle. When the state incarcerates someone, it assumes control over that person's environment and a heightened duty to protect them from harm. That duty extends equally to the Department of Corrections staff who work in these facilities every day.

### ***Background on PREA in Vermont***

In 2003, PREA was created to "provide for the analysis of the incidence and effects of prison rape in Federal, State, and local institutions and to provide information, resources, recommendations and funding to protect individuals from prison rape." PREA was passed with unanimous, bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress.

In 2013, the Vermont DOC began implementing federal PREA standards. States were required to collaborate with their federally recognized sexual-violence coalition. The Vermont Network worked closely with DOC to develop policies and procedures. In 2015, DOC achieved federal PREA certification.

Today, this partnership continues through the Network's DIVAS program, which provides confidential support services to people incarcerated in Vermont's correctional facilities, including those who experience sexual harm while incarcerated.

### ***Codifying PREA Standards in State Law***

Vermont has invested years into strengthening prevention and response to sexual violence in correctional facilities. Codifying PREA at the state level maintains and continues that progress.

In December 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a memo announcing its intent to revise federal PREA standards to align with the Executive Order on "gender ideology extremism." That rulemaking process is ongoing. In the interim, PREA auditors were instructed to ignore standards that protect transgender and intersex people, who face disproportionately high rates of sexual violence in custody.

Last year, the Department of Justice also made significant funding cuts to the National PREA Resource Center, the primary resource of support to states for training, technical assistance, and

corrective-action. Funding changes at the Resource Center interrupted trainings for DOJ-certified auditors, when there was already a significant shortage of auditors, further compromising compliance work.

Within a short period, there have been significant shifts to PREA that will compromise incarcerated people's safety. Codifying PREA at the state level is a necessary step to preserving continuity, stability, and accountability, regardless of who holds federal office or how federal agencies shift their priorities. Through this codification, Vermont will express its commitment to the protection and safety of all individuals who are incarcerated and those who work in correctional facilities.

There is more work needed to ensure incarcerated people are fully protected from sexual violence. In the future, this may include further legislation on PREA compliance and enforcement. H.550 will ensure we continue to move forward, not fall back.

Thank you for your commitment to this issue and time. I would be happy to answer any questions.