

Dear Senator Hashim and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of S.151. From 2021-2025, I served as a board member at Rainbow Playschool, a childcare center in Woodstock serving children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. Months into joining the board, we began to face challenges with a family enrolled in the center who had demands regarding our food allergy policy. The board and school were faced with a complaint filed with the Human Rights Commission of VT and then a lawsuit, there were no damages to any person, the complaints are purely policy complaints and a result of not meeting the demands of the family, despite many reasonable accommodations being made for this family. The childcare center has been faced with 4 years of legal bills and the board has had to focus much of its volunteer time on responding to the various complaints and the lawsuit instead of investing its time and money into better wages and benefits for staff, expanding enrollment, investing in learning resources for both staff and children. The center is one of the largest in the community and has been in existence for over 40 years. We have also had a difficult time recruiting parents to join the board as many are hesitant to get involved given the experience the board has faced.

This experience has significantly reduced my willingness to join another board, and I have cautioned others to think carefully before volunteering. When volunteering carries the risk of prolonged legal battles, personal expense, and added stress, it's fair to ask why anyone would step forward when we already have so much to manage.

S.151 would help protect volunteers acting in good faith and reduce the chilling effect that litigation risk has on community service. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Barger  
Pomfret resident