

Dear Senator Hashim and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I recently learned of your consideration of S.151, and I wanted to write to voice my support for the bill. I live in Woodstock, Vermont and unfortunately have had personal experience with adverse litigation as a volunteer. I have served as a member of the Town Investment Committee of Woodstock since 2017, and served as a board member of Rainbow Playschool for two years from 2022-2024, when my children were students there.

Unfortunately, after my tenure at RPS, I was personally named (along with all other board members) as a defendant in a law suit from a third party who took issue with the school's policies. Despite the involvement of the school's insurance, outside counsel, and the Vermont Human Rights Commission, the plaintiff continues to pursue their case to this day. In fact, my understanding is that they have actually moved out of the state, and are continuing from afar. As you might imagine, this experience has taken up significant time, effort, money, and mental toll from all who are involved, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

I wish I could say otherwise, but this experience and the personal toll it has taken on me and my family has all but eliminated my desire to volunteer in this capacity in the future. I joined the board in good faith to help the community and my children's school, and instead am still wrapped up in a messy and difficult lawsuit 4 years later.

Volunteering is a critical part of our communities, but hard working people should not be burdened with legal woes for their good intentions and attempts to contribute. If a plaintiff has a problem with an organization, they should absolutely have their day in court. However, that liability should not extend to volunteers just trying to assist in good faith.

S.151 would help protect volunteers and be a step in the right direction of fostering more much needed contributions of time and effort in our communities. I think such legal protection would also cause those who have steered clear of volunteering to reconsider, knowing that their own desire to help would not be used against them in a legal setting.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Patrick Proctor