

Dear Chair Hashim and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I respectfully request that the following statement be entered into the public record and read into committee regarding S.193 which is on your agenda Wednesday March 25 at 9:45 am.

I am writing as a victim's mother and a Vermonter who has spent years navigating the consequences of a system that lacks meaningful competency restoration and forensic care.

It is deeply disappointing to watch S.193 — a bill addressing real and urgent public safety gaps — become delayed at this stage after moving through multiple committees. At a time when clarity and leadership are needed, the process has instead become difficult for the public to follow and understand.

During Senate Institutions testimony on March 19, it was acknowledged that concerns regarding language — specifically around the use of “sex” — could be addressed by the House through amendment. That makes it even more concerning that this issue has become a point of delay rather than a solvable part of the legislative process.

S.193 missed crossover after valuable committee time was spent on the Burlington ICE hearing instead of advancing time-sensitive public safety legislation. Priorities matter — and this bill should have been one of them. For victims and families who have been advocating for years, this feels like yet another moment where our voices and experiences are set aside.

I am also disappointed that today's Senate Floor discussion on S.193 has been pushed the bill's discussion back to March 31. At this point in the session, that timing would leave the House with little to no opportunity for meaningful review or amendment, further jeopardizing the bill's chances of moving forward.

For those of us directly impacted, this is not a theoretical debate. This is about whether Vermont will take steps toward a system that provides appropriate treatment, accountability, and protection for communities.

It is time for the Vermont Legislature to focus on what is actually happening here in Vermont — not federal headlines, not photo opportunities, and not opportunities for political gain. Public safety is not political. It is personal, and it is long overdue for real attention.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to Lt. Governor Rogers for his commitment to public safety and mental health care for Vermonters. Had he not invited victims to the State House in January, I do not believe S.193 would have been discussed at all. I would also like to thank Senators Norris and Mattos for their support of this effort.

If there are substantive reasons why S.193 should not move forward, Vermonters deserve to hear those reasons clearly and directly. Transparency is essential to public trust.

Vermonters — and especially victims and their families — deserve better.

Sincerely,
Kelly Carroll
Voices for Vermont Victims