



Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
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To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services and the survivors who have been such an integral part of our Workgroup conversation, specifically Joanne Kortendick and Kelly Carroll, we wish to offer the following thoughts.

First, we are grateful to have been included in the conversations these past several months. We have learned, and we hope in turn, you have been educated. This Group has been tasked with difficult work, and while we have not always agreed, the process has been respectful and inclusive; we sincerely appreciate that.

We intend to keep our comments relative to acknowledging the integral roles those who have experienced truly serious harm and loss must hold to a general nature. To that end, we want to underscore the tenets most important to victims and survivors, which is not to detract from a report that we feel reflects the conversation. The most important values in the community of victims and survivors have long been identified as the ability to be heard, to receive information, and to be provided with notification – especially at those critical points that the Legislature has already recognized in versions of S.89 as passed out of House Judiciary. Our emphasis has always been on considering the needs of victims and survivors of the most serious and violent crimes.

When someone has been the direct or “indirect” victim of a violent crime, the simple ability to have basic information should not be so dramatically different depending on the route the case goes. Providing information, notification, and the ability to be heard are recognized throughout Vermont laws and the laws and the constitutions of other states. Vermont has recognized there is a way to balance privacy and confidentiality with the rights victims have in Vermont – we need look no further than our very recent changes to Vermont’s juvenile laws that looked to these basic tenets to guide change.

Serious and violent crimes do not occur in a vacuum – the rights of those impacted must have a place in a humane and just system.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Poehlmann, J.D., Director, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
Joanne Kortendick
Kelly Carroll

