

To the Honorable Leaders of the State of Vermont,

My name is Annie Hoadley, and I live in Orleans, Vermont. I am writing as a Vermonter and as a mother whose family was positively impacted by Joseph “JJ” Millett. My son Andre, who is autistic and does not easily connect with people, worked with JJ when he was a community worker through Northeast Kingdom Human Services. JJ was one of the rare people Andre trusted and connected with, and that alone speaks volumes about the kind of person JJ truly is.

I am asking you, respectfully but urgently, to hear our voices and understand how deeply wrong this situation feels to those of us who know him.

JJ is not the man these charges portray him to be. He is a veteran, a man of faith, and someone who has quietly helped people in our community for years. When JJ worked with my son and other families through Northeast Kingdom Human Services, he showed patience, kindness, and compassion that cannot be measured on paper. He spent his time helping people grow, encouraging independence, and building confidence in the individuals he supported.

The man we know is calm, thoughtful, and deeply committed to helping others succeed.

What happened in late February was not a crime. It was a mental health crisis.

When JJ was struggling, he did exactly what we hope people will do in that moment. He asked for help. He reached out during a moment when he needed support. These are not the actions of someone with criminal intent. These are the actions of someone trying to do the right thing in the middle of a mental health emergency.

Yet instead of being met with care and compassion, he was met with criminal charges.

That is where the system failed him.

When a veteran in crisis reaches out for help, the response should be treatment, stabilization, and support. It should not be prosecution. Charging JJ in this way sends a chilling message to veterans and families across Vermont that asking for help during a mental health emergency could lead to punishment instead of care.

That message puts lives at risk.

JJ’s case shows exactly why Vermont needs stronger and clearer pathways for veterans and people experiencing mental health crises to receive medical care instead of being pulled into the criminal justice system.

As you continue your work on legislation such as S.193 and S.181, I ask that you keep JJ's story in mind. Vermont has an opportunity to ensure that veterans and individuals in crisis are placed on a medical path to treatment rather than on a criminal track that could follow them for the rest of their lives.

We must recognize the difference between criminal intent and human suffering.

JJ is a veteran. He is a helper. He is a man who has spent years giving back to his community and helping others when they needed support. He deserved help when he asked for it.

Instead, he was failed by the very system that should have protected him.

Please look beyond the charges and see the human being. Please respond with fairness, compassion, and wisdom.

Our voices deserve to be heard, and JJ deserves justice.

Sincerely,

Annie Hoadley
Orleans, Vermont

"Seek justice and defend those in need." Isaiah 1:17 (NKJV)