

Rep. Grad –

Thank you for including me on the witness list last week for S112, an act relating to creating the Spousal Support and Maintenance Task Force. I'm sorry that the House floor schedule did not allow you to discuss the bill on Friday, but I see that it's on your calendar for this week.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to again be on the witness list to testify on the creation of this task force. At this point, my intention would not be to speak to the underlying issues about whether the laws regarding alimony should be changed (although we would be eager to weigh in on that question at an appropriate time in the future). The concern we have with the bill as it stands is in the proposed composition of the task force membership.

There is adequate representation from policy makers and enforcers (i.e., legislators, judges, and attorneys) as well as the advocacy group speaking on behalf of those support payors who feel that they have been treated unfairly. However, what is lacking is representation from those who are on the receiving end of alimony, as well as those payors who feel they have been treated fairly.

I would strongly urge the committee to consider adding a member to this task force who will represent the interests of those Vermonters who receive alimony.

As women constitute 97% of those who receive alimony, and as the financial well-being of women goes down after divorce while that of men goes up (on average), there are significant gender-based considerations that need to be part of any conversation about spousal support and maintenance. Therefore I would offer the Vermont Commission on Women as an appointing authority to fill the proposed new seat.

Thanks so much for taking this into consideration,
Cary

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