

Voices
for Vermont's Children



Respectfully submitted to the Vermont Senate Committee on Judiciary
By Amy Brady, Policy Associate, Voices for Vermont's Children
March 26, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I applaud the work that this committee and others have done to remove the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse and support broadening the scope of that statute to include physical abuse through S.99. My intent is to keep my testimony brief.

In addition to my testimony, I have sent the committee Rosemary La Puma's publication entitled *De-Categorizing Child Abuse - Equally Devastating Acts Require Equally Solicitous Statutes of Limitations*. Rosemary outlines other state's statutes, names the inequities that exist within those statutes, explains the individual and community impact of childhood trauma, counters the common opposition to statute of limitation changes, and speaks to the necessity of the bill before you.

It is my understanding that this bill was drafted in response to a request from St. Joseph's Restorative Inquiry. I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to thank them for bringing this issue forward and to extend that gratitude to the bill sponsors as well as this Committee for listening to them. We know that trauma leaves people vulnerable and can often strip them of power and voice. Centering survivors in restructuring our systems redistributes power and has the potential to heal past wrongs while creating meaningful and visionary changes to our current structure.

In addition to repealing the statute of limitations, Voices for Vermont's Children recommends looking into the current barriers to accessing records. Without access to records, the burden of proof is difficult to overcome. While we cannot undo past harm, we can create the context for healing. When we allow the people who have abused others to continue to hold the stories of those they have harmed, we are getting in the way of the truth and reconciliation process.

In conclusion, Voices for Vermont's Children fully supports S.99 and looks forward to working with this Committee and others to address proactive measures to prevent abuse. We also support removing barriers to healing, especially those have been unearthed by survivors all around the state.

