

Vermont Traditions Coalition - Testimony Thursday February 28, 2019

Senate Judiciary Committee

Testimony Re: Senate Bills 22 and 72

Please accept our gratitude for this opportunity on behalf of VT Traditions Coalition and its thousands of members across the spectrum of land based businesses, occupations, outdoor recreation and educational and sporting interests. As you may know we represent a broad coalition from snowmobilers to forest land owners and the hunting, fishing and trapping communities.

In this meeting we are asked to focus on a broad list of bills with varied goals and different policy goals. I will not be testifying in detail regarding these two bills as may be expected. One concerns ERPO (emergency risk protection orders) and proper judicial application in domestic violence cases and the other is a straightforward proposal for new restrictions on the lawful purchase and private home possession of firearms. Instead I will provide detailed, authentic research and testimony of others and sourced from public areas, including testimony at other committees here in this building. Some are related to disruptions experienced by teachers in Vermont schools and some from practitioners of Restorative Program Practitioners in school systems here in Vermont. Another area I will provide documents in will be the larger picture of suicidal behavior and prevention. These will be forwarded to members directly and for posting on the committee pages.

Following my research, some observations follow. I suggest you read these documents to see if my observations are valid.

In testimony before the Senate Education Committee, teachers and other professionals have detailed experience and professional recommendations at dealing with "precursor" behavior to all types of youth violence, including suicide. Reporting, collaborative peer-to-peer restorative practice and stronger social/psychological intervention are all suggested, as well as the need for a more robust social services and mental health crisis intervention system in schools and the larger community.

Also striking in my research was the concensus in the mental health and emergency medical community regarding identification, intervention and response to behaviors and actions that provide diagnostic clues to the dangers of suicidal or other violent

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Re: Senate Firearms Bills

This opportunity is greatly appreciated by VTC and its many members across Vermont. I would also like to thank the Chair for facilitating the upcoming public hearing

Risk factors for suicide include depression and other mental health diagnoses or a substance-abuse disorder, often in combination with a mental disorder. More than 90% of people who die by suicide have these risk factors. Other risk factors include prior suicide attempt; firearms in the home; exposure to suicide behavior; and family history of suicide, mental disorders or substance abuse; and family violence.

Most people who die by suicide have experienced a mental health condition (90%) that might have responded to treatment. 19% of Vermont high school students reported feeling depressed for more than two weeks – the definition of clinical depression. The need to identify youth who are at risk could not be more striking. Of the youth identified by schools trained in suicide prevention, 83% were between the ages of 13 – 17.

Source: Vermont Suicide Prevention Council webpage, at:

<http://vtspc.org/what-we-know-about-suicide-nationally-and-in-vermont/>

<http://vtspc.org/understanding-suicide/>

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