

RE: Testimony to Amend Draft No. 1.1 – H.183

We the undersigned submit this written testimony in support of reinstating the Intercollegiate Sexual Violence Prevention Council, Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 2187 in H.183, as passed by the Vermont State House on March 25, 2021.

Two years ago, we testified in support of the Senate’s ambitious approach to addressing the issue of sexual assault in institutions of higher education. We applauded the creation of the Council and welcomed Vermont’s bold approach given the tenuous state of Title IX implementation under the Trump Administration.

We continue to believe that the Council is crucial for understanding and preventing sexual violence in institutions of higher education. The Council assembles stakeholders without whom sexual assault cannot be adequately addressed. For example, H. 183 proposes that the Council include “a person with expertise in sexual violence responses within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer community appointed by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services.” (See § 2187 (8)). [Multiple studies](#) have demonstrated that, in addition to facing higher rates of sexual violence, LGBTQ survivors of sexual violence face barriers to accessing assistance.

Additionally, the Council includes colleges students, who are invaluable for their knowledge of campus environments. Two years ago, we presented findings from a campus survey we conducted at Middlebury College. Our findings show that sexual violence and harassment is vastly underreported at Middlebury College. A recent American Association of University Women (AAUW) [survey](#) indicates that underreporting in educational institutions is a national problem.

We strongly believe that the Council is well-equipped to address the pressing issue of sexual violence. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Taite Shomo

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