



Changes to Various Statutes of Limitations on Criminal Offenses
House Judiciary Committee
February 18, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Committee's consideration of changes to various statutes of limitations on criminal offenses. As Vermont's leading voice on domestic and sexual violence, the Vermont Network works to promote policies that support victims and survivors of violence to thrive and live lives free from violence. This includes policies that maximize victims' choice and autonomy.

Lifting the statute of limitations on crimes expands victims' ability to seek healing and justice. Many victims – especially victims of crimes which are sexual in nature – experience significant barriers to reporting their crimes. For these reasons, we are especially supportive of the proposed elimination of statutes of limitation on various crimes pertaining to sexual abuse of minors and other vulnerable persons. These sexual offenses are among the hardest crimes to investigate and prosecute. They are often unreported, and when victims do choose to report them, it is often after significant delay. These delays may be caused by neurobiological responses to trauma which can impair the memory of certain elements of their experience. In the case of child victims of sexual assault, victims may also fear the outcomes of reporting their crime. According to the National Institute of Justice, among children who are sexually abused, three-quarters of child victims are abused by someone who is well-known to them.¹ Despite these barriers to reporting, research indicates that false reports of sexual assault to law enforcement are rare. It is estimated that less than 10% of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement are false².

We have several questions which we are seeking to clarify about the proposed language. These questions include:

- Why does the proposed language eliminate the statute of limitations for 3 V.S.A. § 1379 (b), but maintain a 6-year statute of limitations for 3 V.S.A. § 1379 (a)?
- Given the statutes of limitations on other sexual crimes, is a 6-year statute of limitations for open and gross lewdness consistent?

Thank you for your time and attention to the statutes of limitations for various criminal offenses. We look forward to the Committee examining the statutes of limitations on civil claims related to child sexual abuse in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Robinson, Deputy Director

¹ Child and Adolescent Victimization in America: Prevalence and Implications, National Institute of Justice

² https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Overview_False-Reporting.pdf



Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence