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Lawmakers and Advocates Highlight Need for H.385 to Protect Vermonters from Coerced Debt

Montpelier, Vt. – Rep. Edey Graning, Vice Chair of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, joined advocates and survivors at the State House this week to highlight **H.385**, a bill that would create remedies and protections for Vermonters facing *coerced debt* — debt incurred through abuse, manipulation, or exploitation. Supporters say the bill would help survivors avoid long-term financial harm from debts they did not willingly take on.

Graning emphasized the bill's focus on economic stability and consumer protection, noting that financial abuse can undermine a person's ability to secure housing, employment, and independence.

Grace B. Pazdan of Vermont Legal Aid said coerced debt often leaves survivors with ruined credit and limited options. She noted that many Vermonters facing debt collection lack legal representation and that clearer statutory protections could provide more accessible relief.

Charlie Parker Gliserman of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence added that financial abuse is a common barrier for survivors seeking safety. "Coerced debt is not just a financial issue — it's a safety and economic justice issue," Gliserman said, urging lawmakers to advance a strong bill.

Advocates say H.385 would offer a practical pathway for survivors to rebuild financially while reducing burdens on the court system.

The press conference can be rewatched on the Vermont House Democrats Facebook page for a limited time.

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