

March 20, 2023

RE: H.445 + H.438

Dear Members of the Vermont Legislature,

My name is Michelle McCormick; I'm a resident of Marshfield, VT and the mother of two children attending Twinfield Union School. I'm also a Worker Owner, General Manager of the Marshfield Cooperative operating the Marshfield Village Store, on the Board of Directors of Cooperation Vermont, an organizer with Regeneration Corps, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Jaquith Library.

I'm writing to share my perspectives as a person that came to Vermont from Southwest Florida having moved here because of the impact climate change has had and continues to have on my hometown. After Hurricane Irma struck my community and was followed by the worst Red Tide in history, I realized that while my family had been in Naples, FL since it was a small fishing town, things were only going to get worse. Naples isn't going to be a place where my children would likely be able to raise children. After Hurricane Ian came through this past summer absolutely devastating the area and now an even worse Red Tide blooming, I'm more convinced of my decision.

When I researched places I could move my children to where they could set roots, build community, and thrive for future generations, I can tell you that one thing that was never on my list of criteria was, "What states have the most robust prison system?"

What attracted me to Vermont is the fact that it ranked in the top five for school systems in the nation, it is a place that has taken great concern for protecting the watershed and maintaining healthy soils, a place where organic food is still grown at the community level, where there is a rich culture of community care and mutual aid and so much more.

As a result, just two years ago I moved my children to Marshfield and since then have absolutely fallen in love with this community. Despite my roots as a "swamplander," I'm now a Vermonter and will be working hard in the long haul for the future of this state and for my children to live in a healthy, thriving community.

When considering where and how the state budget should prioritize expenditures, I encourage you to certainly consider the needs of the folks living here, but also the new generation of young families the state is hoping to attract to keep us going into the future.

I must admit I was absolutely shocked to learn that Burlington High School was being held at an abandoned department store instead of an actual school and that there was a moratorium on spending for new school construction, while at the same time the state legislature was already spending money on feasibility studies to construct multiple new prisons.

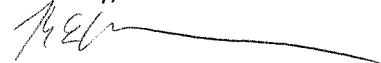
As part of a building coalition of organizations and individuals, we are calling on elected officials to pass the **Prison Construction Moratorium (H.445)** and **Alternatives to Incarceration (H.438)** so our state can further reduce the incarcerated population, implement alternatives, and invest in communities rather than build prisons.

There is an urgent need for social services, an emergency need for publicly supported housing, and a critical need to bolster the schools and basic infrastructure needed by our communities.

That's why we are challenging that the State of Vermont commit to "Build Healthy Communities, Not Prisons!"

We believe \$250 million would be better spent on housing, treatment programs, education, jobs programs, childcare, healthcare, and all the other supports that keep communities truly safe. We are here to show the state that they do not have the backing of Vermonters to build these new prisons.

Sincerely,



Michelle McCormick
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