

My name is Opeyemi Parham. I have been a resident of Vermont since 2014; and I am currently a resident of Montpelier. I have known of the Land Access and Opportunity Board for a little over a year.

Please support the Land Access and Opportunity Board with the designated 1.97 million of appropriations in support of its base operations.

Vermont needs this organization, which is staffed by and dedicated to the needs of Vermont communities that continue to suffer from marginalization and ongoing systemic oppression.

I have witnessed many attempts by people of different races and various classes to gain access to sustainable living here in Vermont. What I have witnessed has not been pretty. I have only seen one person of African-American descent be able to obtain a mortgage and to purchase a home. My own experience has only been as a renter and that was difficult enough. I was questioned by the police while sitting in my own driveway in Dummerston, because a neighbor had reported "a suspicious individual". I had been living there for close to a year. A white queer couple told me to my face that they were worried about renting to me because they were already highly visible in their rural Windham County neighborhood.

What happened to my trailer park neighbors after this last round of flooding has been heartbreaking.

Vermont still has a ways to go on equal housing and land purchasing opportunities for BIPOC people, people with physical disabilities, and low-income whites.

The Land Access and Opportunity Board provides a place to explore inequities such as the ones I have described above, and to build support that will move Vermont forward in its commitment to reparations, particularly our state's commitment to healthy and fair distribution of land.

Opeyemi Parham MD