

I have read H.492, and urge you to move it through the legislative process, as I believe it is a good step forward in reducing the documented bias that exists in our law enforcement and correction departments. Having a central board overseeing the collection of data on stops by law enforcement, anti-bias training and and implementation of fair and impartial law enforcement policies will increase the movement away from unequal treatment of people of color, and toward a more equitable system. Recent high-profile killings of African-Americans in particular has raised awareness of a problem that has been endemic but little-discussed--of differential stops of people of color, and disproportionate use of force during those interactions. The anti-immigrant rabble-rousing that is abroad after the recent national election has also been a wake-up call regarding attitudes in this country against immigration by people of color or of a "different" religion. It is time to take a stand against these benighted attitudes, to make Vermont a better place for all of us. As a parent, I want my children to grow up in a state where the rights of all are protected. I want them and all people to be confident that law enforcement is focused on control of crime, not wasting time with stops based on racial/gender/immigration status/gender identity/perceived national origin or other personal characteristics. I support extension of the CJTC's "Model Fair & Impartial Policing Policy", and I believe that having the proposed Racial Justice Oversight Board will speed up the adoption of that form of policy across the state. I hope you will listen to the voices of those who support this bill and its goals, and will support its passage.

Timothy Swartz
Northfield