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April 3, 2018

support of S.281 **Systemic Racism Mitigation Oversight and Equity Review Board to combat systemic Racism across the systems of State government.**

House Committee on Government Operations,

If it is permissible, I would like this corrected version of my testimony to be replaced by the one I submitted on April 2, 2018.

I am testifying in support of S.281 **Systemic Racism Mitigation Oversight and Equity Review Board to combat systemic Racism across the systems of State government in Vermont.** Thousands of Vermonters are concerned about systemic racism and have voiced their concerns for years.

I have spent the better part of my adult life fighting for this cause out of my own desire to affect change and without compensation. I have also witnessed a painfully slow rate of progress. We are behind in addressing this issue compared to other states with similar demographics like Maine for example who established a Racial Justice Commission in 2011¹

When I was 16 years old at a rally in front of City Hall in Burlington to protest the plans of the KKK to hold a rally in our state. At the time, (1982) I was a student at Burlington High School where the Student Council sponsored an annual event called "Slave Day".

I served as one of the Co founders of Uncommon Alliance, a grass roots organization led by people of color established to eliminate racial disparities in the Justice System. Uncommon Alliance was the impetus of the first race data collection project in traffic stops in VT.

I serve as Chair of the BPD Commission – 3 year term expires in June 2018
I participated for a year or so in the VSP's Fair and Impartial Policing Committee

I served as Chair Attorney Generals Advisory Panel on Racial Disparities in the Juvenile and Criminal Justice System of VT. I resigned after 6 months. I resigned because I realized the work was too much to rest on the work of volunteers. In my opinion, the make up of the Panel is an example of systemic racism. The controversy as well as the mis representation of the truth of the conduct and processes honored by the Chair and Vice Chair related to the Act 54 Racial Disparities Report released last month are also examples of Systemic Racism in action.

As you are hopefully aware, the Human Rights Commission is barely equipped to address explicit bias - acts of blatant racism like cross burning, calling someone "nigger" . Systemic Racism, Explicit Bias, Implicit Bias are obviously related but three distinct manifestations of racism and constructs of White Supremacy.

¹ http://mprc.me/documents/ME_racial_justice_policy_guide.pdf

Systemic racism is responsible for deep suffering. It is hard for you to understand and acknowledge because of; your white privilege, the fragility your denial causes or vice versa, our lack of diversity in the state of Vermont. Your lack of ability or willingness to understand the extent and impact of this problem does not make it any less real for people who experience it every day.

As public servants you are responsible for defending all Vermonters right to live in freedom and with equal opportunities and protection. Whether you are willing to accept this or not, it is the truth. The truth of systemic racism is that you, me and our children are all harmed by it. Until we can identify, measure and improve our ability to ensure equal opportunities in employment, education, health care, etc our state is failing in an inexcusable way.

²The fact that VT jails have always been populated disproportionately by Black and Brown people is a result of one of two things.

These two possible explanations are mutually exclusive of each other.

1. black and brown people are disproportionately represented in our jails because we are inherently more criminal **OR**
2. we are being unjustly arrested, prosecuted and incarcerated because of our skin color and racial profiling

³In fact, A Black driver is almost 4 times as likely to be searched as a White driver in Vermont.

⁴The fact that our children are expelled from school at disproportionate rates than their white classmates is either because;

1. our children inherently have behavior problems/lack of respect for authority **OR**
2. our children are often responding negatively to being mistreated by the adult educators our state pays to educate our children and racially bullied by classmates, neighbors and other community members.

In recent conversations with DCF Commissioner Ken Schatz and his Executive Assistant Karen Vastine through my former capacity as the Chair of the AG Advisory Board on Racial Disparities in the Juvenile and Criminal Justice System, about the possibility of designating black and brown children and youth in the custody of DCF, Woodside and adopted children as a vulnerable population, they are supportive of presenting this possibility to the VT DMH.

⁵The fact that the average adult Vermonter earns about \$15-17 hour is a result of;

1. black and brown vermonters lacking in professional capabilities **OR**
2. because we dont get hired or promoted at a rate equal to our similarly qualified white co workers.

² <http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/>

³ **A Deeper Dive into Racial Disparities in Policing in Vermont** March 26, 2018 by Stephanie Seguino Professor Department of Economics & Fellow, Gund Institute for the Environment University of Vermont and Nancy Brooks Visiting Associate Professor Dept. of City and Regional Planning Cornell University

Burlington School District Equity & Inclusion Data Report 2014 (Assessment School Year: 2013 – 2014)

⁴ <http://www.bsdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EIR-Report-2013-2014.pdf>

⁵ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/vermont/#economy>

In an article entitled, **“The Link Between Racism and PTSD” Psychology Today Sep 06, 2015**

A psychologist explains race-based stress and trauma in Black Americans. It's important to understand that race-based stress and trauma extends beyond the direct behaviors of prejudiced individuals. We are surrounded by constant reminders that race-related danger can occur at any time, anywhere, to anyone. We might see clips on the nightly news featuring unarmed African Americans being killed on the street, in a holding cell, or even in a church. Learning of these events brings up an array of painful racially-charged memories, and what has been termed “vicarious traumatization.” Even if the specific tragic news item has never happened to us directly, we may have had parents or aunts who have had similar experiences, or we know people in our community who have, and their stories have been passed down. Over the centuries the Black community has developed a cultural knowledge of these sorts of horrific events, which then primes us for traumatization when we hear about yet another act of violence. Another unarmed Black man has been shot by police in our communities and nowhere feels safe. Research shows that trauma can alter one's perceptions of overall safety in society. Black people with PTSD have been found to have lower expectations about the benevolence of the world than Whites. When comparing Black and White Americans, one study reported that African Americans held more negative perceptions of the world, appearing more skeptical and mistrustful (Zoellner, Feeny, Fitzgibbons, Foa, 1999). Experiencing a traumatic event changed perceptions of the world in White victims from positive to negative, yet the perceptions of Black victims were not impacted by traumatic experiences. My take on this is that they are already traumatized by life in America. Most of us with dark skin know the world is not safe. similar experiences, or we know people in our community who have, and their stories have been passed down. Over the centuries the Black community has developed a cultural knowledge of these sorts of horrific events, which then primes us for traumatization when we hear about yet another act of violence. Another unarmed Black man has been shot by police in our communities and nowhere feels safe.

The issue of systemic racism in VT is widespread, it has been documented. It causes destruction and suffering beyond what you will ever understand. We have a potential model to address systemic racism in the work of the Vermont State Police Agency's Commitment to Fair and Impartial Policing, race traffic stop data collection, analyzation and review.

55 years ago today 4/4/1968, when I was three years old, Rev Dr Martin Luther King was assassinated. I wonder how any of you as parents would have explained to your children why a great man like Dr King was killed. What we have to tell our children is; Racism is real. Its wrong and even when you experience it, you still have to respect your teachers, adults, your white classmates, your neighbors, storeowners, and the institutions you have to navigate in order to be successful in our society. Above all, don't disrespect the police, do whatever they tell you to do because it can be a matter of life and death.

You have a duty as public servants to work diligently for the protection of the rights of non white vermonters. You have a duty to hold individuals accountable for their role in systemic racism in the agencies and organizations that employ them in. A failure to do this with a sense of urgency is a neglect of your sworn duty as elected officials.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Christine Kemp Longmore

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with Law Enforcement Officials