

To Members of the House Government Operations Committee,

I am very concerned about systemic racism in Vermont and beyond. I strongly believe the only way we can start to make a change is to hold people accountable. S.281 as it was written was a start in that direction. The amendments recently written by the House Government Operations Committee significantly water down the strength of the bill such that it is rendered meaningless. I am writing to ask that you restore the essential components of S.281. I am particularly concerned that your new amendments mitigate the independence of the Director and committee by placing them under the auspices of the Governor. Doing this transforms the role into a political appointment; one in which the Director is at the mercy of politics of a particular Governor rather than one with the authority to make hard decisions that mitigate systemic racism. The position of Secretary of Education in Vermont is exemplary of just this scenario. Since that position was hooked to the Governor's office many decisions regarding schools and students have not been in the best interest of the schools and students the secretary is meant to serve. It is for this reason that Rebecca Holcombe decided to step down. To be effective, positions such as these absolutely need to be kept independent. I urge you to restore the essential components of S.281. Send a bill to the House that will indeed be effective in addressing systemic racism. Your current amendments will potentially have more negative than positive effects resulting in wasted taxpayer money and cynicism regarding the important and necessary reasons for which the bill was created in the first place.

Sincerely,  
Debra Stoleroff  
Plainfield, Vermont