

To the House and Senate Judiciary Committees:

Thank you to all legislators for reading this letter. I write to you today to urge you to please adopt the H492 and S116 bills, which call for a Racial Justice Oversight Board.

Not only have people of color in Vermont exhausted themselves with testimony on racism for years, and that there is overwhelming data showing implicit bias in our criminal justice system (i.e. one in 14 African-American males are incarcerated in our predominantly white state, according to state data) but now the arrests of Zully Palacios, Enrique Balcazar and Alex Carillo add another layer of urgency to support H492/S116. We must support these bills right now. To see people rounded up like this, with arrests of three immigrants within three days of each other (young people who all happen to be people of color and are Spanish-speaking) is reminiscent of apartheid-like behavior in South African history, where segregation was LAW and police raids on people of color were institutionally inconsequential. This is not right, it must not be normalized, and it is not what America is about. None of these young people have committed a crime. These ICE round-ups are in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that is reason enough in itself for the State of Vermont to do everything in their power to stop racism in our state by developing a Racial Justice Oversight Board, in order to ensure that ALL institutions are compliant. This policy must be adopted now and cannot wait any longer. We are clearly moving in a backwards direction on racism and we must commit EVERYONE and EVERY INSTITUTION to stand up to it completely and consistently in order to put an end to racism, otherwise we are not making a commitment to seeing it end, since our current system is not working. The time is also now more critical than ever for the State of Vermont to adopt this policy, as it is long overdue to put an end to racism in our state, but it is also critical timing to adopt this as a model policy for the rest of the United States to put an end to racism and show our nation that we are going to resist the racist policies of the Trump administration, and that we are unafraid to do so at all costs. Please adopt the H492 and S116 bills and let's make them effective immediately.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Carpenter