

Hello,

My name is Mara Iverson and I am a Montpelier resident. I would like to explain my support for H.492/S.116. I saw the January 2017 report on the discrepancy between police stops for people of color and stops for white people. I believe this is due to implicit bias rather than explicit bias. I think an oversight board will be able to make recommendations and track results to begin addressing implicit racial bias within areas of the justice system.

I spend a lot of my personal time, energy, and other resources learning about implicit bias and educating others in workshops and community conversations. Research indicates that it is possible to reprogram bias, but it has to be an intentional process because the social programming that results in implicit bias is so unintentional. Think of social messaging like rain. If you walk outside when it is raining, you get wet. You have to take intentional action like putting on a raincoat or putting up an umbrella in order to reduce how wet you become. Our social messaging around people of color has been toxic for hundreds of years. It has been and continues to be, even in 2017, even in Vermont, a deluge. Measures like the oversight board to help us enforce our Fair and Impartial Policing laws and other equity legislation are necessary and valuable. Just as it is helpful to wear galoshes as well as a rain coat and to add an umbrella, it is helpful to defend against bias with a multi-pronged and intentional approach.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message, and please support H.492 and S.116.

Mara Iverson