

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to give you my testimony for House Bill H.492. I work in a private higher education institution here in Vermont, and I have had many of our students of color let me know that they do not feel safe or welcome here in our state. Many of our black/brown students have told me their experiences of driving while black/brown: being followed for miles, then being pulled over and told that their insurance companies haven't updated some information in their system and are ticketed with maximum fines. One black student's registration hadn't been fully processed and she didn't have her temporary registration available as she had been hospitalized unexpectedly due to a serious and rare form of MS, and on her way back from the hospital was pulled over and told her car was illegal. They said she had to have her car towed, in addition to getting ticketed, and she had to call a friend to come pick her up late at night. Two black students had a gun pulled on them during a routine stop because they dared to ask why they were pulled over.

These are students coming to Vermont looking for opportunities within our education system, and quickly learn that this so-called progressive state is far more racist than where they came from. They tell me they look forward to leaving Vermont. We are losing potential employees; smart, savvy, dedicated students who would be an asset to our state are leaving. And we lose valuable and much needed diversity in our workforce.

This is why H.492 is so important to Vermont. Please, please...make H.492 a priority and see that it gets adopted this year. We can't afford to wait any longer for racial justice.

Kindly,

Melody DeFlorio