

Senate Government Operations Committee Jan.24, 2018 3:30PM
Testimony S. 281 Diana Wahle, Community Equity Collaborative

In our discussion of S.281, we are asked to address the following questions:

- What is this bill intended to address?
- What is the problem?
- How will this approach provide a solution?
- How will we know if it has been successful?
- What will we measure to see if anyone is better off?

What is this bill intended to address?

BILL AS INTRODUCED S.281 2018

It is the intent of the General Assembly to create an independent board to promote racial justice reform throughout the State by:

- (1) providing education on systemic racism and how to combat it;
- (2) mitigating systemic racism in all systems of State government and public education; and
- (3) creating a centralized platform for race-based data collection and overseeing its collec-

What is the problem?

Preparing for the changing demographic in our State: for example, in southeastern Vermont 20% of students self-identify as people of color (POC) vs. Windham County 2010 census for all ages 6% POC.

THE DESIRED CHANGE: Vermont State Government will devote sufficient resources to reducing identified racial disparities across all systems of state government.

How will this approach provide a solution?

(1) Providing education on systemic racism and how to combat it

Design a uniform training curriculum to build awareness. This is a body of knowledge and practice. It should be “culturally responsive, social justice oriented and inclusive of accurate indigenous history”. Curriculum content includes:

Understanding our own social identity as members of the dominant culture related to race.

Knowledge of institutional and structural racism in Vermont and nationally. Gaining an understanding of the underpinnings of race as a social construct.

Exploring the intersection with socio-economic, ability, LBGTQ, social competency development topics, all the while keeping in mind how uncomfortable it is to keep our focus on racism.

Develop a team of high quality Vermont trainers who agree to implement the curriculum over a two year period with each State branch and/or department.

Coordinate curriculum with Results Based Accountability (RBA) training implementation, using racial disparities as examples.

Advocacy for Legislative Education – initial discussions with Speaker Johnson & President Pro Tem Ashe – role of Snelling Institute.

Establish a statewide network – productive dialogue and support
Vermont Vision for a Multicultural Future conference

(2) Mitigating systemic racism in all systems of State government and public education – Establish infrastructure to evaluate present situation, implement and monitor reduction of racial disparities

A. Learn from agencies/departments/commissions/council

Identify what is working well – replicate to serve all systems. But do so sequentially over a period of two years.

Vermont State Police

VTrans

Governor's Equity & Diversity in the Workplace Council

Vermont Health Equity Council

Vermont Chief Performance Officer Susan Zeller

Vermont Accountability Group members

B. Equal Employment Opportunity:

Have each agency/department identify an EEO officer who will partner in the work related to performance measures. DOL and VTrans have their own officers at present, while AHS has EEO support through the State Department of Human Resources. The statewide EEO officer participated in the 2017 Vermont Vision for a Multicultural Future conference.

Orientation: Insure each EEO officer has a background in RBA and racial disparities/implicit bias

Use VTrans – Lori Valburn as resource

C. Three Best Practice Examples

Community Equity Collaborative experience with Diverse Workforce Development Subcommittee – largest employers in SE Vermont working jointly to attract applicants of color. Partnering with College of St. Joseph in Rutland.

The Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP) is a free summer enrichment program focused on improving access to information and resources for college students in the health professions. . SHPEP's goal is to strengthen the academic proficiency and career development of students underrepresented in the health professions and prepare them for a successful application and matriculation to health professions schools. These students include, but are not limited to, individuals who identify as African American/ Black, American Indian and Alaska Native and Hispanic/Latino, and who are from communities of socioeconomic and educational disadvantage. Supported by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. <http://www.shpep.org/>

The BDCC & Six College Collaborative Internship Program offers works to partner currently enrolled college students and recent graduates with local companies through paid internship opportunities. The program attracts students from across Windham County, the State, and the Country to start their careers in Southern Vermont, providing work-based learning experiences to students and qualified labor to Windham County's growing businesses and nonprofits.

D. Departmental Program Design: Each branch of State government will develop a Results-based Accountability plan on racial disparities related to their work. Establish a liaison from each branch of State government with a background in RBA who will work with staff on racial disparities/implicit bias program design. This person might be the performance accountability liaison designated by the State's Chief Performance Officer.

How will we know if it has been successful?

(3) Creating a centralized platform for race-based data collection and overseeing its collection and dissemination.

We propose asking the Vermont Chief Data Officer, Andrew Laing, to convene meetings with the liaisons from each branch of State government focusing on program design. Their task will be to add racial disparities indicators and performance measures to guide their departmental programs and to frame their annual reports to the General Assembly. These indicators and performance measures will inspire improved program design and accountability.

Implement the training program sequentially using model branches of governments as inspirations. Do not engage all departments at one time.

Resources: The Vermont Accountability Group, Dru Roessle, AHS Performance Improvement Manager and Vermont State Police

What will we measure to see if anyone is better off?

Identify and monitor racial disparities across all systems of state government

Identify indicators and performance measures that are related to racial disparities in the agency's workforce and services using Results Based Accountability (RBA) as a guide. Example attached:

Racial Equity and Act 186 - Conditions of Well-being for All Vermonters - measuring population well-being

Racial Equity and Service System - measuring performance and the well-being of clients

Resources: The Vermont Accountability Group, Dru Roessle, AHS Performance Improvement Manager

Systemic Racism Mitigation Oversight & Equity Review Board

Recommendation that the initial meetings of the board be trainings on the topics of racial disparities and implicit bias.

Questions:

Membership: How to insure POC representation on the committee? Could committee members be nominated by local officials or state representatives?

What is the Board's background dealing with implicit bias/racial disparities? Also RBA?

Frequency of meetings: Why is the board limited to meeting not more than 12 times a year?