

Mike Ferrant

From: wlnial@comcast.net
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2020 1:35 PM
To: Mike Ferrant
Subject: [External] FW: House Committee on Judiciary -- Police Reform in Vermont

[External]

From: wlnial@comcast.net <wlnial@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2020 1:33 PM
To: 'mgrad@leg.state.vt.us' <mgrad@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: 'mbailey@leg.state.vt.us' <mbailey@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: House Committee on Judiciary -- Police Reform in Vermont

Dear Chair Grad,

This letter is intended to support my public testimony on August 12. I am primarily focusing on S-124 and H-464 and subjects related to the Training Council.

I am an advocate for people with mental health conditions. My involvement in this advocacy started almost immediately after the March 2016 police shooting death of Phil Grenon. Since then I have become involved in many committees and initiatives around the state. Most recently I participated in the hiring process for the Executive Director of the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council (VCJTC).

During the hiring process I was introduced to several of the members of the training council. I gained respect and trust for those that I met. The stakeholder group that was formed for the hiring process had broader public representation than what is included on the current training council. I believe it also exceeded the public participation on the council that is proposed in S-124 and H-464. The council appears to be hearing and reacting to the conversations and testimony that is happening in Vermont. I respect your efforts to shape the council. It is important that the community be able to communicate what it wants of law enforcement and that the council is given the responsibility of how to execute to meet those expectations. It is a significant step forward that the bill seeks to incorporate broad community input into the Training Council's policymaking, training design, and training programs.

The following comments are specific to the bills S-124 and H-464 that you are working on.

- a) The bills are proposing to expand the public participation in the training council. Yet it should be noted there are voices missing from people with disabilities or mental health conditions who too often experience excessive use of force by law enforcement. There are several statewide groups that are cross-disability organizations that should be considered as additions to the council. The VT Coalition for Disability Rights, VT Center for Independent Living and Disability Rights Vermont are examples of such organizations that should be considered as potential members of the council.

- b) It seems hard to always know who the right voices are to be on the council. I am wondering if one or more council positions could be identified to be filled at the discretion of the more permanent public members of the council as identified in the bill.

- c) I can feel that even with my short involvement with the training council it is easy to assimilate the law enforcement point of view as my own. I want to try to keep fresh public eyes and ears on the council. So, I think that term limits for public members of the council should be something to consider. This might not be appropriate as part of statute but could be communicated in the bill as being part of the intent of the legislature.

Regards,

Ward Nial
South Burlington Vt

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