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STATE OF VERMONT
JOINT LEGISLATIVE JUSTICE
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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January 10, 2019

House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, Government Operations, and Judiciary

Dear Committees:

During the 2018 legislative interim, the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee met to carry out its charge pursuant to 2 V.S.A. chapter 23. In addition to our chapter 23 duties, this year the Committee was tasked with undertaking a review of Vermont's justice system, including both State and local functions, with a focus on reducing crime, improving public safety, decreasing recidivism, and increasing accountability and cost efficiencies. As a part of this work, the Committee reviewed the 2017 Vermont State Auditor's report to the General Assembly on State and local spending on public safety. The report showed that although crime has remained relatively stable in Vermont, State appropriations for public safety entities have risen from an inflation-adjusted \$252 million in 2001 to \$381 million in FY 2017, a 51 percent increase or a 2.6 percent compound annual growth rate.

The Committee also heard numerous reports related to our system of criminal and juvenile justice. Pursuant to the charge in Sec. 6 of 2018 Act No. 164, an act relating to bail reform, the Committee reviewed the report of the Nonwhite Offenders Study Committee, a stakeholder group tasked with gathering and evaluating data regarding all nonwhite offenders in the custody of the Department of Corrections. The report revealed the need for current, uniform, and comprehensive data from all entities that are a part of the criminal justice system infrastructure.

On behalf of the members of the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, we respectfully request that your committees devote time to these two issues during the 2019 legislative session. First, we request that your committees examine law enforcement spending at the State and local levels to ensure we are using funds efficiently in our efforts to reduce crime, improve public safety, and decrease recidivism. Second, we request you develop strategies for uniform race-based data collection across all points of entry to the criminal justice system. Access to this data will provide a clearer statewide picture of Vermont's justice system and help the General Assembly to identify and address the racial disparities within it.

Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

Representative Alice Emmons
Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, Chair

Senator Dick Sears
Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, Vice Chair