

August 22, 2020

Representatives Grad and Copeland-Hanzas and Senator Sears:

We, the Vermont Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), join ACLU of Vermont, Justice for All, Migrant Justice, Outright Vermont, Pride Center of Vermont, Rights and Democracy, Vermont Branches of the NAACP, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Vermont Center for Independent Living, Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform, Vermont Human Rights Commission, Vermont Legal Aid, Vermont Public Interest Research Group, and Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative in urging you to fundamentally reimagine the role of police in our communities and commit to this ten-point action plan:

1. **End qualified immunity.** Vermont law shields officials who abuse their power from meaningful accountability. State lawmakers need to disincentivize police misconduct.
2. **Remove police from schools.** The presence of "school resource officers" (SROs) disproportionately harms students of color, students with disabilities, and low-income students. We must end the use of police in schools and invest in educational support services.
3. **Limit police involvement in low-level offenses.** We must prevent unnecessary police interactions which disproportionately impact people of color. That includes limiting police involvement in mental health crises, authority to conduct "consent"-based searches, and discretion to cite or arrest for petty offenses like "disorderly conduct."
4. **Ban police use of military-grade equipment and techniques.** Police militarization is unnecessary and dangerous. Giving police military equipment encourages the use of paramilitary tactics with civilians, including no-knock raids, as well as abusive "crowd control techniques," such as use of pepper spray, rubber bullets, tear gas, and sound canons.
5. **Prohibit use of new and invasive surveillance technologies,** including new surveillance technologies, advanced or autonomous weaponry, facial recognition software, and predictive policing strategies.
6. **Require appointment of independent counsel** outside of State's Attorneys and the Attorney General's office to review and prosecute police misconduct.
7. **Increase transparency so that police misconduct cannot be concealed.** That includes ending confidentiality for officer disciplinary records and other limits on public access to information.
8. **Require robust, system wide data collection and analysis** from police, prosecutors, courts, parole board, and Department of Corrections to detect and eradicate systemic racism.
9. **Establish community control and authority over law enforcement,** including over police priorities, transparency, and discipline, and end collective bargaining agreement provisions that limit oversight and accountability.
10. **INVEST in communities, not policing.** It is time to demand that our laws and our investments match our values as Vermonters, and to affirm that Black Lives Matter. Local and state policymakers must prioritize people and communities, not policing and prisons.

We look forward to working with you to advance this agenda at the state and local levels. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lynn Stanley, LICSW
Interim Executive Director
NASW Vermont Chapter