

Written Testimony for August 16, 2020 Hearing Regarding Proposed Changes to Law Enforcement in Vermont

I'm submitting written testimony today in the hopes that this will allow for more BIPOC voices to be heard during today's hearing.

I'm a white woman who no longer feels comfortable calling the police when I see something of concern (generally white folks with mental health or substance abuse illness who seem like they may cause harm to themselves or those around them). I'm terrified that someone will end up getting hurt or killed or traumatized who shouldn't. And at the same time, I feel concerned for their safety or that of their friends.

We need to redefine public safety.

We need to heed the call of the Black Lives Matter Movement--to defund our police. Fund the wellbeing of our communities making sure we all have what we need to thrive. Rethink our model of public safety so that all of us can feel safe.

I do not believe we can reform a system whose historical roots are in slave catching, oppression and militarism. We need to have forums like this specifically to discuss what a different model for our state could look like. How can we make sure everyone feels safe and has all of their needs met?

As the Movement for Black Lives writes on their website:

" We know the safest communities in America are places that don't center the police. What we're looking for already exists, and we already know it works. We need look no further than neighborhoods where the wealthy, well-connected, and well-off live, or anywhere there is easy access to living wages, health care, quality public education, and freedom from police terror. "

At the same time, systemic racism and white supremacy live within all of our institutions. I support the Vermont Racial Justice Alliances demand for **a holistic legislative agenda that includes but goes beyond policing to end systemic racism and white supremacy.**

We need to:

- **Provide for immediate targeted COVID-19 relief for BIPOC.**

- **Support economic development and empowerment of BIPOC** through programs like adult education and job training.
- **Create and fund a statewide database to track racial disparities.**
- **Eliminate qualified immunity.**
- **Eliminate school resource officers.** Our children are the last people who need to be policed.
- **Pass H.478** so that we can begin the work toward reparations for the institution of slavery.
- **Pass H. 937** to fund a policy analyst and research analyst to support the work of the Executive Director of Racial Equity .
- **Pass H.466** to promote hiring and retention of workers with barriers to employment, including workers in recovery from addiction and workers with past incarceration.
- **Pass H.284** to require criminal justice data be publicly posted.

Above all, please make more space for and listen to the voices, stories, and demands of BIPOC Vermonters and prioritize their thoughts and solutions. An anti-racist state and country will be better for all of us, but we need to prioritize the vision of those who are being most harmed by the current system.

Thank you for your work and time.

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