

2/22/2019

To the Senate Judiciary Committee:  
Comments on an act relating to hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents.

What I have to say is very short and succinct.

Section 2A – Working Group.

- 1) It seems like it might be a good idea for the Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel (hereafter RDAP) to provide some form of oversight to this proposed working body. I say this because the RDAP is involved at present at looking at ways in which to collect data for the purpose of ameliorating the kind of systemic problems that this bill is designed to tackle.

Section 2B – Membership of the working group.

- 1) I think that it is of vital importance for there to be community stakeholders on this proposed body, just as there are such stakeholders on the RDAP. The presence of these figures will lend credence to this new body in that the working group will be seen by the public as not simply being composed of policy wonks from State Government. The inclusion of community stakeholders helps assure that citizens feel a connection to this body, since it includes people whom they may know and with whom they have relations over these matters of racial bias.
- 2) It may well be helpful for the community stakeholders who are already serving on RDAP to serve on this body in order to facilitate communication between the two bodies. This is particularly true if RDAP is providing some oversight to the proposed working body. On the other hand, having an increased number of community stakeholders involved in the process of confronting bias both within and without state government also seems like a good idea, and so an entirely separate membership from the stakeholders from RDAP might also be a good thought. I am of two minds on this point.

I am delighted that the Criminal Justice Training Council will report annually to the RDAP regarding the Panel's recommended data collection methods and trainings and policies pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 168 (f)(2) and (3). As I said above, the RDAP is beginning to look at data collection and its importance to the process of confronting bias. We will soon be in a position to offer constructive criticism on these matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Etan Nasreddin-Longo  
Chair, Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel