



To: The Chair of House Judiciary, Representative Maxine Grad
and the House Judiciary Committee

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Re: H.317: An act relating to establishing the Bureau of Racial Justice Statistics and the
Bureau of Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Panel

Crime Research Group supports the placement of the Bureau of Racial Justice Statistics as written. The fact that Vermont has an Office of Racial Equity is significant and to strengthen this Office with data analysts and an outreach/marketing coordinator emphasizes the importance of the goal of achieving racial equity throughout state government. As the research center most familiar with criminal justice data and analysis I offer the following:

1. Utilizing existing agencies and offices will ensure efficiency and effectiveness for ongoing race data collection and analysis into the future.
 - a. The Office of Racial Equity was set up as a place to “**identify and work to eradicate systemic racism within State government.**” One of the duties stated in statute is to **manage and oversee the statewide collection of race-based data to determine the nature and scope of racial discrimination within all systems of State government. 3 VSA 5003(a)(2)** Echoing what others have said this is the opportunity to move toward equitable outcomes in housing, wealth, education, employment, health services, child welfare not just criminal justice. Make this a broad vision with discrete analysis based on available data.
 - b. We have unique experience developing MOUs, data sharing agreements, and contracts with state departments to obtain the data necessary to conduct analyses. The Agency of Digital Services staff have been critically important for facilitating access to data. Under 3 VSA § 3301, in creating the Agency, the first responsibility listed includes **the sharing of data and information within State government.** This is one of the responsibilities that ADS has: they understand the data systems, data fields, and data requirements and can help ensure that the correct data is extracted and standardized for analysis. Subsection (b)(2)(A) defines **information technology activities as the creation, collection, processing, storage, management, transmission, or conversion of electronic data, documents, or records.**
2. Broadening the focus of the bill to include improved outcomes across systems will allow the analysts to collect the data in one place and conduct more comprehensive analyses across combined data sets (e.g., employment and criminal justice).
3. Not all the data in H.317 are available (i.e., not being collected in any system), some data need to be extracted manually (i.e., data entered into a text field), and some needs to be calculated (i.e., length of time in a program that is calculated by subtracting the date of entering the program from the date of exiting the program). We provided information in the data table in

the RDAP report that points to these limitations. Some data are duplicative of the data in other bills noted below.

4. Independence can be achieved in different ways. In another bill, independence is achieved by stating it in the legislation. “The office shall act independently of a State Department in the performance of its duties.” (H.265 Office of the Child Advocate). A question has been submitted regarding the placement of the Office of Racial Equity in another part of state government or as a separate office similar to the Center for Crime Victims Services or the Human Rights Commission. The benefit of H.317 is that there is included in the bill an advisory panel that can ensure allegiance to the principle of independence.
5. There are other bills that have data collection included in them:
 - a. H.265, the Office of the Child Advocate includes: (E) data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, disability status, and any other categories that the Advocate deems necessary.
 - b. H.210, the Office of Health Equity includes establishing better and more consistent collection and access to data to better understand health disparities in Vermont. “Health equity data” means demographic data, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, primary language, age, gender, socioeconomic position, sexual orientation, disability, homelessness, or geographic data that can be used to track health equity.
 - c. S.16 has a robust section on the collection of education data under the powers and duties of the Task Force on School Exclusionary Discipline Reform. This bill proposes to create the School Discipline Advisory Council to collect and analyze data regarding school discipline in Vermont public and approved independent schools.
 - d. H.159 – Economic Development, Housing, General Affairs: this bill has a section on State BIPOC Business Development, to in part create a portal to improve State data collection to better serve the variety of identities represented within the BIPOC community. When the portal becomes active data on race, ethnicity, and gender for individuals registering businesses will be collected.

This speaks to the comprehensive nature of racial disparities, and the wide-ranging data that are associated with it.

6. Data Integration Project: The Arnold Foundation is currently reviewing a project that includes a process for developing data governance, identifying data requirements and data architecture. This is the foundation for data integration and the process needed for identifying the data and structure in each department, creating a process to extract the data, and getting agreements between departments in place. We are working with DPS and other stakeholders (the Judiciary, States Attorneys and Sheriffs, the Attorney General’s Office, DOC, Defender General’s Office, and ADS) on the National Governor’s Association and the National Criminal Justice Association supported by the Administration for developing the foundation for integrating data across departments and systems.