



04/08/2022

Dear Honorable Committee Chairs, Honorable Senators, Members of the Vermont State Committees:

My name is Sandrine Kibuey, I am the Director of Housing Advocacy Programs at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, one of state's five community action agencies that addresses fundamental issues of economic, social, environmental, and racial justice, and work with people to achieve economic independence. Our Statewide Housing Advocacy Programs provide education, support, advocacy, technical assistance, and referrals for people and organizations and our team serves thousands of renters, mobile home residents, and people experiencing discrimination each year. We also partner with housing and service providers, municipal officials, and other organizations to promote inclusive, affordable housing for all.

I am also the president of the VT New American Advisory Council (VNAAC), a new 501-c-3 organization that is made up of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse group of New American leaders working to address and dismantle barriers which prevent New Americans' from civically engaging, participating and feeling a sense of belonging. VNAAC also works to expand opportunities for NA communities to thrive socially, culturally, and economically in Vermont.

CVOEO and VNAAC support the passing and funding of S.148.

We do support S.148 because this proposition establishes the first environmental justice policy for our State of Vermont; a policy that certifies that no segment of the population of our State should, because of its racial, cultural, or economic makeup, bear a disproportionate share of environmental burdens or be denied a proportionate share of environmental benefits; a policy that further certifies that State agencies are to provide leadership, support and opportunities for the meaningful participation of all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice populations and overburdened or underserved communities, in the development, implementation, or enforcement of any law, regulation, or policy; a policy, if implemented and funded, will support the alleviation of environmental burdens caused by environmental, racial, health and socio-economic injustices.

It is common knowledge that some Vermonters have more opportunities than others to enjoy good health, good food, good housing, good employment, good education and higher quality of life. It is common knowledge that the impacts of the pandemic have been particularly prevalent among the most marginalized to say Black, brown, Indigenous, immigrant and people of color communities in particular and low-income communities in general such as mobile home residents with their unique vulnerabilities to environmental injustice.

Mobile home parks are a unique, affordable and accessible path to home ownership for households with low income. They make up 7.2% of all housing units in Vermont, and yet approximately 40% of these sites were affected by Hurricane Irene. Mobile home residents continue to face a number of environmental and habitability challenges in parks related to consistent and clean water, proper sewage and drainage, energy efficiency of their homes, and more.

All this reflects the enduring inequities generated by structural, systematic racism, discrimination and fundamental gaps in public and private systems of governance, justice and support. Therefore, there will be no progress made without the systematic elimination of all prohibitive and discriminatory policies and practices.

Personally, as a new American and as a Vermonter, I do believe that, if put successfully into effect, this Environmental Justice policy will have a positive impact on my life, the life of my children and generations to

come but I do also believe that in order to succeed in this endeavor, communities facing social isolation and systemic discrimination should learn and understand what is at stake, understand why this system change is so important and foremost, understand why we all have to be responsible and active participants to this transformative system process.

We respectfully ask for the passing and funding of S.148. They are imperative steps towards a better future for Vermont as a State, a community, a people.

Thank you for your attention.



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