



**Human Rights Commission**  
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May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To: Senate Education Committee  
From: Amanda Lucía Garcés  
Re: S.138 Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams  
State House  
Montpelier, Vermont

Dear Chair Campion and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

The Commission remains concerned about the mandate for threat assessment teams in Vermont schools as revised in S.138 by the House Education Committee. We firmly believe that inclusive and supportive school environments are essential for promoting a sense of safety for ALL students, and we need to prioritize trauma-informed practices that advance this goal.

We have previously voiced our worries about the potential negative impact of this model on BIPOC students. The risk of being misidentified, inappropriately labeled as threatening or hazardous, and being denied access to critical resources could have serious consequences for their well-being. Furthermore, there is a possibility that students with marginalized identities may face unjust disciplinary measures such as suspension, expulsion, or referral to the juvenile justice system.

Although we appreciate the positive changes made to the bill to strengthen protections for students with disabilities, we are disappointed that our BIPOC students and other marginalized students do not have access to an alternative process. We should not be passing legislation that inadvertently harms some students while intending to do good. It is imperative that we exercise due diligence and reconsider the mandate for threat assessment teams. We suggest that these teams remain optional, and schools that choose to implement them receive the necessary resources to benefit our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Amanda Lucía Garcés*  
Amanda Lucía Garcés

Director of Policy, Education and Outreach

