

Hello,

I hope Vermont legislators will do everything they can to resist the increasing tide of fascism that is shaping policies and institutional behavior across the country. We are seeing the effects of this shift not only in blatant incidents -- such as the recent attack and subsequent arrests in South Burlington -- but also in quieter, everyday decisions that align more closely with federal priorities than with Vermont's values.

For example, I have been deeply disappointed by several recent actions taken by UVM with respect to international graduate student workers, as well as by how concerns raised by the community were handled (I would be happy to provide more detail if helpful). In my view, these actions reflect broader federal-level pressures and are troubling in the current political context. They also appear to conflict with UVM's stated commitment to Respect, Integrity, Openness, Justice, and Responsibility—particularly the call to challenge injustice toward any member of the community.

International students have been wonderful additions to UVM and to Vermont. They voluntarily bring their talents and effort here to be yoked to our plow, and we should honor, respect, and be grateful for that!

This same logic extends beyond UVM to many Vermonters. I welcome your leadership in advancing policies that affirm and protect people from unjust targeting or harm.

More broadly, I believe it is imperative that Vermont take concrete action to protect all people in the state from violence or intimidation by ICE, Border Patrol, and other law-enforcement actors. To truly uphold their commitment to protect and serve the public, local law enforcement—including the State Police and South Burlington Police Department—should be prepared to stand with community members and protesters, not facilitate federal actions that endanger them. They should not cooperate, and they should be honest in their self-reporting (please see e.g. <https://greenmountaindsa.org/statements/aided-by-local-and-state-police-ice-raids-south-burlington-home-while-vermonters-fight-back>).

I hope Vermont's preparedness, policy frameworks, and response networks are topics you are actively addressing.

I recognize that large institutions -- whether universities or state governments -- are often complex and unwieldy, and that systems can produce harmful outcomes even without malicious intent by individuals. However, when we see that happening, I believe we all have to pull together to try to right the ship. There can be no excuse to let the system as a whole commit wrongdoing, regardless of any underlying intentions.

That is why I am reaching out now. I am ready and willing to help in any way I can to ensure that Vermonters are not unfairly targeted or burdened by forces beyond their control, that they are kept safe, and that they can live freely amidst an increasingly chaotic political landscape.

Sincerely,
Julia Witte Zimmerman