

To: Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
From: Jennifer Poehlmann, J.D., Executive Director  
Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services  
**Re: H.546/ An Act Relating to Racial Justice Statistics**  
Date: January 11, 2022

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services wishes to express its strong support of H.546, which proposes to create a Division within the Office of Racial Justice to collect and analyze data related to systemic and racial bias and disparities within the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Sadly, the recent data compiled and shared by the Council of State Governments has laid bare what many inside and outside of the system have long suspected. Through our role on Vermont's Sentencing Commission, we have been grateful to have had a seat at the table for many of these discussions and are committed to furthering these discussions in continued partnership with the Office of Racial Equity.

The influence of systemic and racial bias upon individuals impacted by the criminal and juvenile justice systems does not only impact those alleged to have committed a crime; victims are also adversely affected. We frequently hear anecdotally from those in the field about the influence of systemic and racial bias towards victims - victims are not being heard, systemic reactions are comparatively less responsive, or allegations are not treated as seriously. To date, there has not been any attempt that we know of to collect and analyze data on victims with these adverse experiences.

As this Committee knows, the Center is the state agency charged with supporting victim services programs and providers throughout Vermont. We collect data across the state from the three programs we are statutorily responsible along with information learned from over 60 individual subgrantees. The Center is in constant conversation with individuals working within or in tandem to these very systems.

The Center believes it would be a valued voice at the table and would like to ensure that the impact of systemic and racial bias on all who are involved in the justice system, including victims, is fully explored.

**Requests:**

- 1. The Center is requesting that it be included as a member of this Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Council.**
- 2. A thorough approach should also include an examination of the impacts of bias on those harmed within our communities.**

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of our request. Please do not hesitate to let us know if we can provide additional information or answer any questions.

