September 1, 2017

RE: Act 54 - Racial Disparities in Vermont

Dear Stakeholder:

During the last session the Legislature passed Act 54, an act relating to the Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel. Section 3 of the act charged the Attorney General, together with the Human Rights Commission and interested stakeholders, with developing:

a strategy to address racial disparities within the State systems of education, labor and employment, access to housing and health care, and economic development. The Attorney General and the Human Rights Commission shall jointly report on the strategy to the Justice Oversight Committee on or before November 1, 2017.

As we all know, the racial disparities that exist in the criminal and juvenile justice systems do not exist in a vacuum. They are driven by institutional bias throughout society. For this reason, it is equally important to address racial disparities in these other systems both to fundamentally change what happens in the criminal justice arena and create a more just State.

You are receiving this letter as a potentially interested stakeholder. We are very interested in your perspective on strategies for addressing what are admittedly broad topics with a wide range of issues. The timeframe is condensed so we hope to seek input as expeditiously as possible.

To that end, we are inviting you (or a representative from your organization) to a meeting on September 28, 2017 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. in Room 10 of the Vermont Statehouse in Montpelier, Vermont. If you are interested in attending, please email Karen Richards at karen.richards@vermont.gov so that we can provide you with additional details closer in time to the meeting.

We have attached a preliminary set of questions we would like to discuss. If there are others you feel are important, please include them in your email.
The goal of the meeting is to gather sufficient information to enable us to provide the Justice Oversight Committee with the requested strategy for moving forward to examine racial disparities in these areas.

If you cannot attend the meeting please don’t hesitate to send written comments. You can submit them by mail to: David Scherr, Office of the Attorney General, 109 State Street, Montpelier, VT, 05609-1001, or by email to human.rights@vermont.gov. Please do not hesitate to pass the information in this letter along to anyone you think might be interested.

Thank you for your interest and we hope to see you or a representative at the September 28, 2017 meeting.

Sincerely,

TJ Donovan
Attorney General

Karen L. Richards
Executive Director
Vermont Human Rights Commission

enc.
cc: Please see attached Stakeholder Groups
Initial Questions for the September 28, 2017 Stakeholder Meeting

Act 54
Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel
Sec. 3 Office of the Attorney General; Human Rights Commission; Report

Task: Develop a strategy with interested stakeholders to address racial disparities within the State systems of education, labor and employment, access to housing and health care and economic development.

Due Date: Report by November 1, 2017.

1) Are there additional stakeholders who may want to be involved in all or some specific areas of inquiry?

2) To what extent are we aware of already identified issues/problems in these areas?

3) What other issues/problems should be examined as possible contributors to racial disparities?

4) Is there data that is accessible to inform us regarding any of these issues/problems? If so, who has it? If not, what other data do we need and what entity has the ability to either collect it or analyze it?

5) What actions/strategies could be employed to address the disparities and in what timeframe?

Please email Karen Richards at karen.richards@vermont.gov to confirm your attendance and provide any additional questions you feel need to be discussed. A final agenda will then be created for the meeting. Thank you!
Stakeholder Groups:

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
James Lyall, Executive Director
137 Elm St
Montpelier, VT 05602

Apartment Owners Association LLC
Angela Zaikowski
P.O Box 701
5203 Shelburne Road
Shelburne, VT 05482

Barre Housing Authority
Charles W. Castle, Executive Director
30 Washington St, Suite 1
Barre, VT 05461

Black Lives Matter Vermont
Ebony Nyoni
294 N. Winooski Ave.
Burlington, VT 05401

Burlington Housing Authority
Allyson Laackman and Chris Barrett, Co-Executive Directors
1 Prospect St, #1
Montpelier, VT 05602

Burlington School District
Henry Sparks
150 Colchester Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401

Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center
Patrick Brown
63 Pearl St., Suite 140
Burlington, VT 05401

Justice for All
Mark Hughes, Executive Director
mark@justiceforall.org

Migrant Justice
Will Lambeck
294 N. Winooski Ave.
Burlington, VT 05401
Montpelier Housing Authority
39 Main St
Montpelier, VT 05602

NAACP (Champlain Area)
Mary Guillory-Brown, Executive Director
P.O Box 3282
Burlington, VT 05408

Peace & Justice Center
Rachel Siegel, Executive Director
60 Lakes St, 1C
Burlington, VT 05401

Rutland Housing Authority
Kevin Loso, Executive Director
5 Tremont Street
Rutland, VT 05701

South Burlington High School
Patrick Burke, Principal
550 Dorset St.
So. Burlington, VT 05403

Spectrum Youth & Family Services
Michael Hill
31 Elmwood Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401

State of Vermont
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
Anson Tebbetts, Secretary
116 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05620-2901

State of Vermont
Agency of Commerce & Community Development
Housing Division
Dale Azaria, General Counsel
One National Life Drive
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State of Vermont
Department of Health
Mark Levin, Commissioner
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Burlington, VT 05402

State of Vermont
Department of Labor
Lindsay H. Kurrie, Commissioner
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Vermont Law School
Bobby Sands
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Vermont Legal Aid (VLA)-Burlington Office
Rachel Batterson, Project Director
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Vermont NEA
Martha Allen, President
10 Wheelock St.
Montpelier, VT 05601

VT Partnership for Fairness & Diversity
Curtiss Reed, Jr., Executive Director
18 Town Crier Drive
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Vermont Principal’s Association
Ken Page
2 Prospect St., Suite 3
Montpelier, VT 05601

Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program
Amila Merdzanovic
462 Hegeman Avenue, Suite 101
Colchester, VT 05446
Vermont School Boards Association
Nicole Mace, Director
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Vermont State Housing Authority
Richard Williams, Executive Director
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Montpelier, VT 05602

Vermont Superintendent’s Association
Jeff Francis, Director
2 Prospect St.
Montpelier, VT 05601

Winooski Housing Authority
Edward Willenbaker, Executive Director
83 Barlow St
Winooski, VT 05405

Winooski School District
Sean McMannon, Superintendent
60 Normand St.
Winooski, VT 05404