

Committee on the Judiciary

House Committee on Ways and Means

The State House

Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Cronin, Chair Michlewitz, Vice Chair Day, Vice Chair Garlick and House members of the Judiciary and the House Ways and Means Committees,

I am writing you today in support of:

- H2141 (Rep. Tyler) An Act improving data collection in the juvenile justice system which requires transparency and accountability by reporting race/ethnicity data at each major decision point of the juvenile justice system
- S2820 An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color.
- Specific updates to improve S2820

My name is Kathy Reboul and I am constituent of Vice Chair Michael Day. My experience includes:

- working within the juvenile justice system at three different Department of Youth Services facilities
- serving on the board of the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition for 4 years
- volunteering with individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated in the Department of Correction facilities. Most recently at MCI Norfolk in the area of Restorative Justice.
- a contributing author to the Crime Classification Manual: A Standard System for Investigating and Classifying Violent Crime

And I am an active member of:

- Massachusetts Coalition for Juvenile Justice Reform
- High Risk Youth Network
- Massachusetts Restorative Justice Task Force
- National Association of Social Workers-Criminal Justice Committee (MA Chapter)
- Coalition for Effective Public Safety (CEPS)
- Working Group for Criminal Justice Reform

I strongly support H2141 (Rep. Tyler) An Act improving data collection in the juvenile justice system. I know that the Massachusetts Coalition for Juvenile Justice Reform that I am part of has provided you with a lot of statistics and data to support that this Legislation is necessary. Since I am part of their group, I was part of reviewing their letter and believe it makes the case from a statistical viewpoint.

I want to share from another level why I believe this Legislation is so important. I am a White woman who grew up in a predominately White upper/middle-class community. When I attended the High School I was told, it was one of the top 10 high schools in Massachusetts. When I was about 22 years old, I began working in a Department of Youth Services facility.

I still remember being hired as a teacher in a Department of Youth Services facility and the complete shocked I felt as I walked into my classroom and saw that almost all my students were Black and Latino. I wondered why they were so many Black and Latino youth and so very few White youth. At first, I put this out of my mind by assuming that it must be because Black and Latino youth were committing significantly more crime. But as I got to know my students, I noticed that many were incarcerated for things that had not gotten my White peers from high school incarcerated. Then I started to see more and more national data of racial disparities in incarceration at both the juvenile and adult levels.

Because I thought of Massachusetts as a progressive State so I assumed this would get resolved. So it made sense that advocates were attempting to get data from the various points in the juvenile justice system so they could look at which parts of the system were contributing to the problem. But they keep on running into governmental entities that would not give them demographic data. So 16 years ago an advocacy group I was part of, Citizens for Juvenile, started asking the Legislature to require transparency and accountability by reporting race/ethnicity data at each major decision point in the juvenile justice system. So far this has not been made legislation and it seems about time.

As a white woman who grew up in predominately white town, I grew up assuming that getting arrested, convicted and the length of the sentence was fair. The longer I have had contact with the juvenile and adult correctional systems, the more I see the arbitrary nature the outcomes of people who come in contact with the juvenile and adult justice system.

1. I remember hearing a high-ranking officer in a predominately White community saying "We don't want to give these youth records, so we have them do community service." That is stark when compared to the data from the ACLU that shows how youth of color in Boston are disproportionately stop and frisked.
2. I remember learning from a man in Western Mass that my predominately White Upper-middle class town was famous for how the many people in the town protected a youth who had committed a vehicular homicide. His police academy had studied the case because of the extreme lengths that members of the town had gone to protect this youth. That is in contrast to hearing about case after case in Boston where people who have served decades in prison, are eventual exonerated.
3. I remember reading in my local paper about the efforts of the police to track down someone who stole money so they could return it. The amount was high enough that in would have been considered a felony. They did not want her to get in that much trouble. I do not hear similar stories of urban police departments.

I grew up being given many advantages. People assumed I would make something of my life, and gave me the resources to achieve. I went onto college as almost all of my peers did.

I saw many of the DYS youth I worked with had not received those advantages and then be viewed as potential criminals. Not just young people who made mistakes and deserved another chance, like the youth from my town who sweep the floors of the police department, because the police “did not want to ruin their futures with a record”. My belief is that if this Legislation is passed, that Citizens for Juvenile Justice and other organization, can begin to track down where the disparities occur and then we can begin the important work of making sure that the color of a youth’s skin stops being a major determinant in their incarceration and sending them onto a path of a harder life that early incarceration can easily lead to.

So I ask that all of you vote for improving data collection in the juvenile justice system so we begin to have a level playing field.

I am also asking you to support S2820 An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color. As recent events have shown us, black communities do not receive the same treatment from police.

So I am asking you to support S2820 and pass reform that ALSO INCLUDES:

- \* Implementing Police Officer Standards and Training with certification and decertification (please eliminate from the Senate bill S2820 the provision to allow police to extend the time frame for a year.)
- \* Civil service access reform so that Blacks and other people of color have equal opportunity
- \* Create a Commission on Structural racism per Rep Holmes
- \* Clear Statutory Limits on police use of force per Rep Miranda
- \* Qualified Immunity Reform so there is not language in the Legislation that means is still incredibly hard for a Massachusetts citizen who has had their civil rights violated to receive justice.

Thank you for considering this.

Sincerely,

Kathy Reboul, MSW

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