

Letter to the editor: Sarcone owes a better response on data

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The study just released by the Iowa Department of Human Rights raises troubling questions about racial imbalance in the Polk County criminal justice system. It appears that the prosecution and detention of African-American young people in Polk County far exceeds their ratio to other races in the county and is in excess of their arrest rate.

AMOS, the private non-profit group made up mostly of clergy, blames the racial disparity on altered policies and practices by the Polk County attorney's office. Polk County Attorney John Sarcone, in a column in the Register [["Critics Misleading People over Juveniles," June 25](#)], denies AMOS's claims of racism and calls the Department of Human Rights data "highly suspect."

Irrespective of the AMOS claims and the county attorney's counter-claims, the Department of Human Rights' data is very troubling and demands a better response from the county attorney who is the chief executive of the county's criminal justice system.

Sarcone must either refute the data and prove the county's enforcement of the law is not racist, or he must demonstrate what he intends to do to remedy what appears to be a very troubling situation.

— Dan Johnston, Des Moines, Polk County attorney, 1977-85