

June 14, 2020

I am a white woman living in the suburbs. Contrary to what Senator Gazelka stated, I need no apology from the governor or anyone else about what occurred in Minneapolis following the horrendous torture and murder of Frank George, as I fear ongoing police brutality and systemic racism much more than any incidents at the mostly peaceful protests. The need for reform should be a bipartisan effort and our elected officials need to stop playing politics with people's lives.

I believe Black Lives Matter and fully support the HOUSE POCI bills in their entirety to address the ongoing needs for police accountability and reform. You are elected to represent ALL Minnesotans. Violence and injustice against any of us stops now! This is a public health crisis that must be addressed.

We will not be divided geographically, racially or by socio-economic status on this issue. Vote yes on these bills and let's really move forward on providing public safety to everyone in the state.

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I am a white woman. I have been living in Apple Valley, MN for over 30 years. I fear ongoing police brutality and systemic racism far more than any incidents at the mostly peaceful protests. I believe Black Lives Matter. I fully support the HOUSE POCI bills in their entirety to address the ongoing needs for police accountability and reform. You are elected to represent ALL Minnesotans. Violence and injustice against any of us stops now! Vote yes on these bills.

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I am writing in support of HF73 and HF75, the 2 of 3 proposed bills in the Minnesota Police Accountability Package that will be heard at the meeting tomorrow morning.

It is imperative that the legislature address as an urgent matter the current lack of police accountability that--by now inarguably--allows the police in the State to operate as a terrorizing operation against people of color with appalling frequency, including during warranted and constitutionally protected public demonstrations. This imperative is due not only to the ongoing danger to Minnesotans who are and will be mistreated and even killed, but also due to the clear and unmistakable expression of the need for that urgent action to stop the carnage (that is, alas, not too strong a word). These are particularly

difficult times we are in, and the actions of the legislature, like those of many other sectors of society, must be extraordinary as well. We voters are clear that we must not see business as usual, i.e, referral of pressing issues for study when there are solid proposals for immediate action. This election year is likely to bring additional fraught police-community interactions, above and beyond the normal heavy flow in every day life, and the State must be prepared to do things differently from this day forward to prevent the worst from recurring.

While the prospect of fundamental change in policing is new to many, the fact is that smart, organized community groups and legal scholars have seen this need for many years, and have developed and refined proposals that are ready for implementation. This will not be last time that action will need to be taken on this, even if all the proposed changes are made, as they are a but a start on the needed change so that refinements and additional steps will surely be needed. But it certainly must be the time that these first steps are taken right now.

As well you know, Minnesotans, and indeed the whole country will be watching what you decide tomorrow morning; indeed, perhaps, the whole world. It will be remembered on election day and beyond.

For all these reasons, please do the right thing and approve these acts.

Please consider this to be formal testimony and acknowledge its receipt.

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Recent events have brought into sharp focus the need for a major reassessment of the role and function of policing in our society in general and in Minnesota in particular. I think I need not reiterate all of the evidence for this critical need; it is quite apparent to anyone who has been conscious in the last few weeks. Of course, it should have been obvious long before this, and was to many people suffering under the dysfunctional regime currently operating in far too many jurisdictions in the United States of America. I have reviewed the various bills included in the Minnesota Police Accountability Package, including HFs 75, 74, 73, 72, 50, 49, and 44. I believe the provisions in these bills are needed and will benefit us all by improving the parameters, community involvement and supervision under which policing occurs in Minnesota. In particular, I believe that HF49 belongs in this package as the citizens affected have deep experience with the law enforcement function of our state and deserve a voice in how it is carried out.

I urge passage of the Minnesota Police Accountability Package.

Respectfully,
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Please lead the efforts on changing police culture. Our children and grandchildren do not feel safe. They aren't safe. Police culture dehumanizes and threatens people of color. This must not continue, and we the people of Minnesota will not let this continue. I know that policing is just an extension of widespread societal, institutional racism. But, we MUST change policing now.

Here is one of many experiences I've witnessed and have been deeply impacted by in my life.

On 5/3/20, I was blessed to meet my fifth grandchild, Ellaia. With covid, meeting her had been delayed, but finally the day arrived. We gathered at Afton State Park. After everyone got a chance to delight in her perfection, we headed to Woodbury to pick up dinner.

There were two cars in our caravan to Woodbury, my daughter in the lead with my five grandchildren, and myself and family in the car behind my daughter. As we approached the roundabout on Woodbury Drive. A black car, going very fast, passed my car, and appeared from my perspective to potentially be a danger to my daughter's car. I was worried the car was going to crash into my daughter's car. All of the sudden, flashing lights appeared, it was an unmarked police car. My daughter pulled over, and we pulled over in front of my daughter's car. I had no idea why an officer would be pulling my daughter over.

The officer was furious. He said my daughter was swerving and almost hit his car. Driving behind my daughter, I know this wasn't the case. In fact, his driving was endangering my family.

The officer berated my daughter, "Don't you know how to drive, you almost hit me", "How's your driving record?", "In the roundabout you almost hit me", etc. What really happened, was that my daughter's car was in his way, slowed him down, and he misused his power given to him by the citizens of Woodbury, and the State of Minnesota.

My twelve year old granddaughter took a picture of the officer and was gesticulating to me. I could see the worry in my granddaughter's face. By this point, maybe five minutes after the stop, I had opened my car door and was facing towards my daughter's car, witnessing the stop for my daughter's and grandchildren's safety. I wanted to be sure the officer knew he was being watched. I was weighing in my mind whether I should walk to my daughter's car or if I did, would the officer perceive a threat, and escalate his actions. I was frightened and enraged. What was going on?

The officer saw our car pulled over in front of my daughter and curtly indicated he was needed at another call.

When we all arrived in Woodbury, my daughter and grandkids were traumatized. My daughter was worried about heading home to Hastings via Woodbury, in case this officer would cross paths with her vehicle again. My grandchildren witnessing the police bullying my daughter is frightening. Don't children of color deserve to be protected from bullies, and have their childhoods honored by police officers? Don't women of color deserve the same respect as white members of our community?

We can NOT continue to let police officers use the power we entrust them with to be violent, aggressive, inhumane, unkind, and abusive. We will not tolerate this continued misuse of power against our beloved family and communities of color.

Thank you,
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I wrote this two weeks after the death of George Floyd at the knees of three officers and the fourth who stood guard. I updated it to include the president's comments on "suburban women".

Senator Gazelka implied that "suburban moms" are frightened. Yes, we WHITE suburban moms (let's be honest about who he was talking about) have been frightened a bit during these past weeks, but even more than that we've been angry, disgusted, sad, frustrated, determined and outraged by what we see.

The world watched in shock and horror as four officers of the law murdered a man in broad daylight in front of witnesses and a camera. Their disregard for George Floyd's life and humanity was appalling to see. Frankly, I am surprised the tag of "Hate Crime" was not attached to the charges as we all watched a modern-day lynching. It was done with knees rather than a rope and a tree, but it was a lynching, nonetheless.

A group of local people decided to protest the police brutality and were met with . . . police brutality. We watched it on the news and even more people were outraged enough to ignore a global pandemic to protest police brutality and were again met with police brutality. So, the numbers grew again. And again. And again and again and again. And as the protests grew, so did the locations. More and more cities held protests and were met with police brutality in those cities, too. And so the numbers grew and the locations grew. Now there are protests in

every American city or town as well as around the world as people who are shocked by the brutality are saying ENOUGH!

Senator Gazelka, and later the president, are likely starting to realize that the condescending comment about suburban moms or suburban women did not go over anywhere near as well as hoped. When George Floyd called out for his mama that day, his plea was heard by all mamas, everywhere. And most of us felt his plea down to the very core of our existence. It was personal and it was primitive. We adopted him as our son that day. So trust me when I say, you need to consider that the vast majority of suburban, urban and even rural moms are grieving his death and just as his real mama would be, we are more than saddened. We are also outraged.

We watched his life be snuffed out like a candle. It horrified us, it terrorized us, but it also enraged and energized us. You have poked the bear. Do not under-estimate us. We are not only marching in the streets now, but we are also organizing. We are calling and writing, and we are making plans for November.

And we are watching in horror at what is happening to our country. As we watch video after video after video of police brutalizing the very citizens they were charged to "Protect and Serve" all across this country, we notice many things.

We watch and we notice that while this country never has the money for education, infrastructure, health care, or even PPE for medical staff desperately struggling to provide care during a global COVID pandemic, we see police in cities big and small well-staffed and well outfitted with the latest in military equipment and supplies. They have all the bulletproof vests, stun bombs and tear gas/pepper spray they could ever want. We realize our country has become a police state. And our anger grows.

We watch and we notice the president visits a plant in Maine producing essential coronavirus swabs and because of his vanity or his lack of respect or both, refuses to wear a mask causing an entire day's worth of vital production to be tossed in the trash. How profoundly out of touch can he be? We are dying due to his lack of concern on this issue and his lack of concern is on display yet again. And our anger grows.

We watch and we notice the gaslighting being done to try to keep us in line. "No tear gas was used" says the White House while people collect spent canisters of tear gas and pepper spray. Saying no tear gas was used when it was "pepper spray" is pedantic and insulting. But learning that there was indeed actual tear gas used fuels our rage.

We watch and we notice that peaceful protests are turning violent not by the protestors, but by the police tactics. And our anger escalates.

We watch and we notice as peaceful protestors, press and even clergy are violently removed from the square to allow the president a photo op across the street. And then the lying begins

by the White House and by Barr as to what happened. Thinking we can all be gaslighted is a big mistake and it fuels our anger.

We watch and we notice the scores of people hurt. A photo journalist lost an eye here in Minneapolis. A 75 year old cancer patient man is in critical care after being shoved by police and cracking his head on the sidewalk in Buffalo. And in between those events, we see Minneapolis police do drive-by macing of citizens. And our rage magnifies.

We watch and we notice the photos of people with bruises the size of grapefruits from “less lethal” rubber bullets and we learn that police are supposed to shoot those rubber bullets at the ground to bounce back up onto the people, but are instead shooting people directly and even apparently aiming for their heads which is how so many are being blinded. We also notice that the bruises are on the BACK of legs, too, indicating people are running away from police so no longer a threat to them. And our anger seethes as we realize the lack of respect for fellow citizens, the lawlessness and lack of humanity involved in that. The attacks on the basic constitutional rights of every citizen are being played out in our streets and on our TV screens every day. And our fury intensifies.

We watch and we notice the attempt to use military against his own people by the president. We watch as our military is replaced in DC by God knows who. We see men in green shirts with no identifying emblems or name tags. We know how illegal and unconstitutional that is. And our rage builds.

Congratulations! The heavy-handed regal response has sparked an uprising by the people of this country, supported by people around the globe, very similar to the one that started this very country.

The numbers of people continue to grow even as time grows since Mr. Floyd’s death. And they show no sign of abating. Why? Because we are D.O.N.E. with the status quo. At one time, police were known as Peace Officers. Then came “Warrior Training” and now as so-called warriors, they see the very people they are supposed to “Protect and Serve” as enemies. They no longer serve or protect anyone but themselves. That is glaringly apparent in the videos. And it has no place in America. This cannot be tolerated any longer.

We want the smear campaigns on Mr. Floyd to stop. The “BuT hE wAs A cRiMiNaL” statements are shameful and completely miss the point. First, so now are the four men who killed him. Second, that is not how our justice system is supposed to work. Police are supposed to apprehend suspects. That’s it! Bring them in. That is all. They are not supposed to act as judge, jury, and executioner. And third, officers of the law, of all people, are supposed to obey the law.

Nothing Mr. Floyd did in the past or on that day in any way justifies the lawlessness of murdering him. Those four are now arrested, charge, and awaiting trial in a court of law for their lawlessness that day. Mr. Floyd never got that option. For a measly 20 dollars, no less. It says far more about the person trying to defend the indefensible than about Mr. Floyd when this racist crap is said. He had as much right to life as the four now awaiting trial. We demand

justice for him. We cannot abide the extrajudicial killing of people of color in this country any longer.

AND we want justice for all people. ALL PEOPLE. All colors. All creeds. All genders. All sexual preferences. All ages. All races. All nationalities. All indigenous and All immigrant. ALL. PEOPLE. Nothing less is an option anymore.

This started here, in Minneapolis, but this is no longer a local or even a state issue. This is now a global issue and I think many of you are missing the importance of what's been happening. This country is broken. So thoroughly and utterly broken. And We The People see that and are determined to fix it. We are no longer willing to see fellow citizens be brutalized by the supposed officers of the law. If the police feel entitled to be so blatantly lawless, there is no reason to fault those who damage businesses.

So I am here to ask, no TELL you. Do not ignore this. Do not downplay this. This is not a one-off. It is not an isolated incident. This is a movement. A movement of the people, by the people and for the people. ALL people. To correct what is wrong in America. To fix what has been broken. Defunding the Minneapolis Police Dept. is only the beginning of what needs to be done in this country. It needs to be torn down and rebuilt from the ground up to be a system that works for the community, not just for themselves. The Military and the Police are separate entities and should never be combined in any way.

Pay attention to this. We The People are screaming for justice for Mr. Floyd as well as for ourselves and each other. The people will not be placated. Nor condescended to. Nor brutalized. Nor gaslit. Nor lied to again and again and again and again. The president has fortified the fortifications and is now in his spider-hole bunker, so this is on you to resolve. No band-aid will work now. No tweaks will suffice. This now requires a major overhaul. Heavy lifting will be involved. So, if you're not up for the job, just tell us now so we can replace you in November.

And do not forget that this country is battling two pandemics: racism and coronavirus. We expect our Legislature to work together to address BOTH. DO IT! Governor Walz is willing to work with you so let him.

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