



April 13, 2021

Chair Jamie Becker-Finn  
House Judiciary Finance & Civil Law  
559 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Justice Bills HF 1104, 1103 and 640**

Chair Becker-Finn and Members,

Poor policing and lack of accountability harm victims directly and the general public indirectly. Minnesotans are well-aware after the deaths of the George Floyd and Daunte Wright that poor policing is also a matter of life and death. We are at an inflection point where we must come together, move beyond the biases of partial interests, and put broad statewide measures in place that improve peace officer and law enforcement agencies standards of conduct and accountability for those improved standards.

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage wishes to express its strong support for HF 1104, HF 1103, and HF 640. We thank the Committee for considering these important police accountability proposals and for the opportunity to testify in support of them. The three bills address key community recommendations for accountability reform and human rights protections.

**Peace officer civil and criminal liability immunity prohibited (HF 1104)**

Simply put, qualified immunity blocks justice and accountability. It dilutes and weakens protections against civil rights violations by peace officers. CMAH supports this bill because prohibiting qualified immunity will remove a major obstacle to police accountability and equal treatment of peace officers and their alleged victims. *We urge you to take this critical step in ensuring equity, justice and public safety by ending qualified immunity.*

**Duties imposed on peace officers and law enforcement agencies regarding video and audio recordings of deadly use of force and civil remedy provided (HF 1103)**

Minnesotans deserve to know, see and hear the truth. Audio and video recordings from incidents where deadly force is used should be available to the public. CMAH supports this bill because it will empower families in their struggle for truth and justice after a deadly use of force incident involving their loved ones. *We urge this Committee to empower families by requiring the release of the recordings of the use of deadly force within 2 days.*

**Citizen oversight councils established (HF 640)**

There is a need for a group of civilians in each city that is tasked with reviewing and improving police officer conduct. We support this bill because it would require that local government units establish civilian oversight councils. *We urge legislators to strengthen this proposal by providing the necessary funding and policy support to ensure that such oversight bodies are inclusive and reflective of the diverse communities they serve.*

Our community has long-standing experience with the ways that racial disadvantages in the criminal justice system harm civil liberty and public safety. We are working through the collective anger, grief, and trauma that is caused by the repeated killings of black and brown people. The State of Minnesota must act urgently to deliver funding and policy measures that would effect systemic change within the justice system. Please support HF 1104, HF 1103, and HF 640 and work to ensure their successful and immediate passage through the legislative process. Thank you for your leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan  
Executive Director  
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage