



Written Testimony to MN House Ways & Means Committee re HF445, "SAFE Act"

February 5, 2021

Dear Chair Moran & Members of the Committee:

ISAI AH is a statewide organization comprised of over 200 congregations, 30 mosques, 400 childcare centers, and dozens of barber shops in Minnesota. Altogether, these institutions represent over half a million Minnesotans. Our mission is to enable people to organize for racial, social and economic justice, and build a democracy that respects every person's dignity and a caring economy where everyone can thrive.

Minnesotans of every race, place, and creed deserve to exist with dignity and respect. We cannot continue to allow police officers to act with impunity against the people they took an oath to serve and protect.

We write in support of on lines 7.27-7.32 which were added to HF445 to provide some basic, common sense standards for holding law enforcement officers accountable for their actions regarding public assemblies.

As we experienced last summer—and that's far from the start— it is that critical that law enforcement be held accountable to the communities they serve. From indiscriminately firing dangerous weapons into crowds, bruising and blinding people including journalists, to randomly spraying chemical irritants out of squad cars, we have experienced how far they will go when unchecked and unaccountable. Yet local police departments and the Mayors who control them appear to lack either the tools, or the will, to do bring accountability. Law enforcement should have to follow their own local policies regarding public assembly response, and if they don't, they should be subject to discipline, up to an including loss of their license to serve.

Together, we the people get to envision and determine what communities where all of us are safe look like. We urge you to adopt this language as a basic step in the direction of common sense police accountability.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad, Policy Director, ISAI AH

Brian Fullman, Lead Organizer, Barbershops & Black Congregation Cooperative