

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR

HOUSE POCI CAUCUS POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY LEGISLATION

June 12, 2020

Senator Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, Speaker Melissa Hortman, and All Members of the Minnesota Legislature:

Whether you are a suburban mom, a rural grandparent, or an urban neighbor; Black, brown or white; or a newcomer, long-time resident, or Indigenous, every Minnesotan wants to be part of a healthy, thriving, and safe community. We all deserve to live in a state where communities of color, particularly those of us who are Black, are not targeted, harassed, brutalized, and murdered by our public servants.

On Monday May 25, 2020, a Minneapolis Police officer murdered George Floyd in broad daylight, while three other officers aided and abetted. The Minneapolis Police Department then lied to the public about what happened, writing in their official report that George Floyd died from a “medical incident.” When Minnesotans expressed their outrage through protest, MPD met this public grief with escalation and more violence. The MPD attacked peaceful protestors and turned our neighborhoods into warzones by shooting tear gas, flash grenades, and “rubber” bullets into crowds indiscriminately. The Minneapolis Police Department further shredded public trust by failing to keep the oath they swore to 'protect and serve' residents and visitors to Minneapolis.

It must be stated: police officers are agents of the state. They have the ability to deprive people of their liberty. The responsibility of having a badge and a gun requires police officers conduct themselves with discipline and hold the public trust. Police officers take an oath to serve the Constitution for all of us equally, but we have little recourse when they violate that oath. The actions of the Minneapolis Police Department, as well as other horrific killings such as the police shooting of Philando Castile, have shown those oaths and existing policies have proven woefully insufficient to guarantee equal justice for all Minnesotans.

The City of Minneapolis is beginning an essential process to move funding, resources and responsibilities from the unaccountable MPD to increased community-led solutions that create real safety. Across the state police have failed to keep us safe and are not equipped to respond to our most urgent crises, whether missing and murdered Indigenous women, or opioid addiction, or our failure to adequately fund child care, education, health and social services. We are grateful to the Minnesota House of Representatives' People of Color & Indigenous Legislators Caucus, which has proposed a package of bills as the first of many steps that would bring much needed change to communities across the state. Among other things this package would:

Raise standards of conduct and police accountability

- Change the laws governing agreements that impede discipline of officers who seriously betray the public trust
- Create a legal duty for officers to intervene in the wrongful use-of-force by fellow officers
- Prohibit use of “Bullet-Proof Warrior” style use-of-force training
- Change the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board to strengthen oversight of officer licensure and training

Strengthen the investigation and prosecution of officer-involved deaths and wrongful actions

- Move primary investigation and prosecution of officer-involved deaths to the Attorney General's Office
- Modify use-of-force laws to prevent wrongful deaths

Increase police accountability and transparency

- Collect and centralize for public access, real-time data on deadly-force encounters
- Establish law enforcement-citizen oversight councils to provide needed community involvement in policing
- Establish a Critical Incident Review process for officer-involved deaths to inform policy change and prevention

Repair and build community trust and create community-centered public safety

- Lift the state ban on local-residence requirements
- Increase investment in community-based mental health and trauma-informed services

Our state is hurting right now. But the cycle of police violence is not inevitable. Together, we can change it. We get to imagine and build what public safety looks like. We get to have a state where we are all safe no matter what language we speak, where we come from, or what we look like. This package of legislation is a fiercely urgent step to begin putting us on that path. Please support each of these bills.

Signed by:

100% Campaign
 Accord
 Advance Consulting
 Ampersand Families
 Arc Northland
 Autism Society of Minnesota
 Barbershops Creating Change in the Community BCCC
 Bold North Recovery and Consulting
 Center for African Immigrants and Refugees (CAIRO)
 Children's Defense Fund - Minnesota
 CWA MN State Council
 Duluth Art Institute Association
 Earthen Pot Ministries
 East Side Neighborhood Services

Edina Morningside Community Church
Education Minnesota
Elders for Infants
Falcon Heights Church United Church of Christ
Family Alternatives
First Congregational Church of MN, UCC
First United Church of Christ, Northfield, MN
Foster Advocates
Frank Theatre
Gender Justice
Girl Scouts Minnesota & Wisconsin River Valleys
HOME Line
Imam Husain Islamic Center
Indivisible St. Peter/Greater Mankato
Islamic Civic Society of Minnesota/ Dar-Alhijrah
Isuroon
Jewish Community Action
JustUs Health
Land Stewardship Action Fund
Land Stewardship Project
Legal Rights Center
Linden Hills UCC
Mayflower UCC
Meadow Park Preschool and Child Care Center
Minnesota Budget Project
Minnesota Communities Caring for Children, home of
Minnesota Conference, United Church of Christ
Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
Minnesota Council of Churches
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
Minnesota Moms Demand Action
Minnesota Nurses Association
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)
MN350 / MN350 Action
Muslim American Society of Minnesota
Muslim American Society of Blaine
Muslims of Minnesota
National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter
Northeast Contemporary Services, Inc.
Our Justice
Our Stories. Our Health.
Planned Parenthood MN, ND, SD Action Fund
Pollinate Minnesota
Proof alliance

ReleaseMN8
Robbinsdale Parkway UCC
ROC-MN
Safe Passage for Children of Minnesota
Saint Joan of Arc Peace & Justice Ministries
SEIU Healthcare Minnesota
SEIU Local 26
SEIU Local 284
SEIU Minnesota State Council
St Joan of Arc Peace & Justice Ministries
St Stephens Human Services
St. Paul 350
TakeAction Minnesota
The Arc Minnesota
This is Medicaid Coalition
UFCW Local 6
Union Congregational United Church of Christ
Wilderness in the City
Women's March MN

(list updated at 1:00PM, June 13, 2020)