

Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN)

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Testimony to House Judiciary and House Ways and Means on Senate 2820 7/17/20

Dear House Judiciary Chair Claire Cronin and House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Committee Members,

This bill the Legislature moves toward passing comes out as a response to the most massive set of marches and rallies Massachusetts has ever had. Tens of thousands of people have been out in streets and squares in cities and towns across the Commonwealth and often more than once. This legislation must have as a goal that it is a response to the reckoning of how we need to reshape our institutions to shed the institutional racism that is there.

There are many good institutions and good people but still so much is not right for too many people. For example, even AG Bill Barr's Department of Justice recently reported that a unit of the Springfield Police Department *routinely* uses brutal, excessive violence against residents of that city.

So we need changes passed. And by July 31. We want to be able to say we did answer the call to respond to the generations of injustices that have occurred on these issues in our state.

Here are some of the elements that we hope will be in the House passed bill:

1. Use of Force: Having strong use of force standards as set out in Rep. Miranda's bill, *An Act to Save Black Lives*, including complete bans on the most violent police tactics.
2. Qualified Immunity Changes: Putting strict limits on qualified immunity to ensure that police can be held accountable when they violate people's rights; the Senate bill has such language towards this goal.
3. Justice Reinvestment: We support including Justice Reinvestment provisions for funding re-entry employment and prevention programs as the prison population declines, and we ask that the legislature be free to allocate more than the \$10 million per year that the Senate set as a cap. Our communities have been decimated by the psychological and economic effects of over-incarceration, and need substantial reinvestment to rebuild. In the face of Massachusetts' \$700 million annual prison

spending, limiting that reinvestment to \$10 million is a slap in the face.

4. Expungement: We support expansion of the right to expunge juvenile records because the current law is unworkable and limits expungement to juveniles who had a single charge on their record although police routinely file more than one charge in cases they file. At present, even charges that were dismissed or ended in a not guilty finding can't be expunged if the person had more than one charge. And young adults often have more than one case. The consequences of saddling youth with a CORI when they turn 18 that will limit their chances to get a job.

5. Banning Facial Recognition: We need to ban the use of dangerous facial recognition technology that would supercharge racist policing.

6. Black and Latino Caucus Recommendations: Please include other recommendations made by the Black and Latino Caucus, some of which are among what's above, and we thank them for their hard work on these issues.

We are a federation of faith based community improvement organizations located in cities and regions across the state. We worked extensively on the Criminal Justice Reform legislation passed in 2018 and other work in this area before and since then. Our affiliates are Brockton Interfaith Community, Essex County Community Organization, Worcester Interfaith, United Interfaith Action of SE MA (Fall River & New Bedford), Pioneer Valley Project (Springfield), Prophetic Resistance Boston, and I Have A Future Youth Organizing Project (Boston).