

July 16, 2020

Subject: Support for Police Reform Standards "Reform, Shift & Build Act" S2820

Dear Judiciary Members,

As a Framingham resident and fellow local government official, I share your commitment for high quality public service, enjoy working collaboratively to solve complex problems, and know many police officers that are genuinely devoted to protecting and serving the public good. As an important state leader, you have the unique ability to make changes that will challenge and finally help dismantle racism and police abuse. I implore you to act immediately by voting to support the recently approved senate Bill 2820 that will take a first step at police reform measures.

Of utmost importance is police reform because George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Danroy Henry, Eurie Stamps, Rodney King are not anomalies but are a direct result of a system that intentionally operates without accountability. Racial profiling, over-reaction, intimidation, pervasive brutality, excessive force, unsatisfactory police work, complete and total terrorization from the police towards Black people and other populations such as mentally ill, disabled, immigrants, and other minorities is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. Police have used violence and force as a first response in minor encounters with Black people and not as a last resort as some may claim.

Please do not water down this bill any further because this should have been done 30 years ago after Rodney King. Police and lawmakers have had many years to get this right. We have had 50 years of reports with recommendations, but they have been ignored and police unions, police chiefs, and elected officials have falsely claimed they did something. I urge you to vote to support any and all police reform measures such as S. Bill 2820 as a first step and to pursue other reform measures to change the policing system.

Some necessary instrumental measures:

- **Abolish Qualified Immunity.** No more legal protections for Police. Officers that violate their public responsibility by using excessive force need to be held accountable. Police are not above the law and should be held to a higher standard, not a lower standard. Other professionals are held personally and financially responsible for their actions. They absolutely should think twice about their actions and especially using physical force.
- **Dismantle Collective Bargaining.** Police unions need to be reined in and the power must be taken away. Union contracts need to be meticulously reviewed to eliminate barriers that shield any misconduct complaints and disciplinary process cannot be with the Union. Disciplinary actions should not be subject to arbitration. Complaints filed by other officers witnessing misconduct must be encouraged. Local officials should not be negotiating with unions on matters related to misconduct, disciplinary actions, or management responsibilities, especially when they do not provide transparent information on what they do. In most jobs other employees know who the bad employees are, and the absurd blue code of silence must end. Reporting must be made easier without fear of retribution. When atrocities go viral, officers are placed on paid leave, which is not an appropriate punishment because the rest of the world calls that Paid-Time-Off. Unions have gone too far and should be solely about wages and worker exploitations.
- **Police Department Transparency.** The public and local officials need to know exactly what police are doing. So much of what they do is unknown, they need to keep detailed

records of calls, responses, charges, outcomes, mandatory detailed reporting, expenses, overtime. Local officials have no idea what police departments are really doing. If they are truly preventing and protecting us from imminent danger let us see that proof.

- **Higher Standards** for screening, qualifications, ethical conduct, education, licensing, certifications for hiring and a decertification process for violations and failure to maintain standards. Emphasize problem solving, conflict negotiation, and leadership skills rather than brute force.
- **Require immediate comprehensive independent investigations and special prosecutor review by an external department** for all officer-related misconduct citations, disciplinary actions, injuries, and deaths, especially of unarmed suspects.
- **Require demographic data collection** such as the race of all individuals pulled over, brought in, the specific charges, arrested and full details on use of force and details of attempts to deescalate.
- **Disarm and Demilitarize.** Taxpayer money should not be going to expensive equipment used to terrorize Black people and other community members. They need to be trained and skilled at de-escalation tactics. Use of force should be prohibited and only used in specific statutory instances to save an innocent life. De-escalation should be mandatory, and all other options need to be exhausted. Most calls do not require weaponry.
- **Prohibit any structural Police Department minimum quotas such as minimum charges and arrest.** This encourages officers to seek out obscure meaningless petty offenses in effort to score and leads to racial profiling and distrust.

These requests are reasonable and comparable for other government officials and industries. Teachers, nurses, emergency room personnel, and psychiatrists are not allowed to respond violently and aggressively to similarly stressful situations. Police that are against these reasonable changes are an immediate red flag. Refusal and unwillingness to improve and oppose accountability is an indicator of a perpetrator that has hidden behind a system that does not hold them accountable. Poor and mediocre performance does not serve the public.

You can seize this moment while there is political will to change history for future generations. I urge you to act quickly by voting on Senate Bill 2820 and taking additional transformative actions immediately. The Police have had years of input without public input. All elected officials and decision makers have a patriotic duty to stand squarely against this system of white dominance.

George Floyd's death at the hands of the police responding to a call about a fake \$20 produced several officers to enthusiastically respond. Outraged, and conquering our fear over the coronavirus, we have stepped into crowds to protest during a pandemic. The political will and wherewithal to make change is now. We cannot wait for small incremental changes because innocent people are, have been, and will continue to suffer and die at the hands of police.

Have you ever wondered what you would have done during the Holocaust, American slavery, or other acts of heinous genocide and abuse? Whatever you do right now is exactly how you would have acted, and silence is compliance. Are you going to step up and do everything within your authority to stand up against racism?

Sincerely,

Abby McCabe

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