

To: House Ways and Means Judiciary Committee
From: Beverly Williams
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Dear Committee Members

I am a life-long resident of Boston, wife, mother of two adult black sons, a retired educator from the Boston Public Schools and currently co chair of The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization.

My lived experiences in Boston, especially Roxbury and Dorchester, has given me front seat observation and first hand knowledge of what goes on in my community regards policing. I will NEVER EVER forget what happened during the Charles Stuart episodes when he shot his pregnant wife in the stomach and alleged a black man did it. White detectives came out in unprecedented numbers and destroyed a black community in hunt of this black man. Stuart killed himself when the truth came out he was the guilty one, but the spirit and trust of the black community was also killed.

Even today, we have the same type of aggressive behavior in places across MA. The scathing reports and citation from the Department of Justice around the gross misconduct of the Springfield Police Dept.'s Narcotics Bureau sheds light on this.

I don't want to get caught up in "every police officer is not a bad cop"; I am reasonable enough to know that. I don't want your attention to be distracted from the fact that much work is needed around police reform in terms of:

- Standards/training and accountability. Certification/decertification of police is necessary in any police reform package.
- Creating racial equity through civil service access reform is long overdue.
- Clear Statutory limits on police use of force.
- Qualified Immunity reform (even today people are calling to reopen "D.J." Henry case because he never got justice. He was one of our own MA residents and cases like that have even happened here in our state although the killing by police happened in NY. And was protected by QI.
- Commission for ongoing work around dismantling structural racism and racist procedures and policies.

Any police omnibus bill should have those 5 things in it, but it would be a disgrace to the black community if you stopped there. **Senate Bill S2820** is a good bill worthy of guiding you to put out a strong police reform bill.

My community has been shortchanged for many years. There is too much policing, and, too many blacks involved with the criminal "justice" system. It is now time to reduce risks and invest in the most vulnerable communities. **Senate Bill 2820** includes the Justice Reinvestment Workforce Development Fund that put resources into the community and would make competitive grants to drive economic opportunities in communities most impacted. I hope there is enough imagination and will in the house to make meaningful police reform based on these suggestions.

-Beverly Williams