

May 19, 2017

Dear Member of Congress:

We are current or retired law enforcement officers concerned about public safety, constitutional policing practices, and building trust between law enforcement and the communities we serve. In light of Police Week, some Members of Congress have sponsored bills that would increase incarceration rates, enhance penalties for certain crimes, and, ultimately, weaken relationships between communities and police departments.

The idea that “law and order” has declined in the previous decade does a disservice to the law enforcement officers who have taken oaths to protect and serve their local communities. Those officers deserve programs and policies that fund critical training, enhance important policing skills that improve officer and public safety, and offer technical assistance and operational support. **We are deeply troubled by recent legislative and executive actions that support this divisive “law and order” rhetoric and that chip away at our hard-fought efforts to sustain long-term trust between our communities and law enforcement agencies.**

As officers who have handled high-profile incidents and routine investigations, we know that keys to success are strong leadership and morale, officer training and accountability, and community trust and engagement. Below, we offer several recommendations based upon these principles.

- Programs that support mental health services for officers. A number of law enforcement agencies are increasingly recognizing the importance of regular mental health checks, crisis hotlines, peer mentoring programs, and other mental health services to alleviate the stress and trauma that officers face.
- Policies and programs for de-escalation and crisis intervention training. As a result of such training, law enforcement agencies learn to apply strategies that reduce the likelihood of force-related incidents. De-escalation training is essential to reducing the number of violent confrontations between law enforcement and communities, as well as increasing methods for age appropriate responses when interacting with youth to improve their safety and well-being in communities. These trainings promote best practices and, as a result, reduce the risk of injury to police officers and members of the community.
- Policies that promote crisis intervention training incorporating the services of mental health professionals. Such professionals can assist officers in identifying and responding to a person impacted by mental illness, an intoxicating substance, or

emotional distress. The public safety benefits resulting from this training are well-documented and broadly supported by policing and public safety experts.

- Programs that assist officers with understanding the effects of systemic trauma and better deal with the aftermath of trauma. Trauma sensitivity or trauma informed training can help officers identify individuals showing signs of trauma related behaviors, which may include: aggression; difficulty processing information; impulsiveness; heightened fight, flight, or freeze response; and hypersensitivity to noise or physical contact. Training can help law enforcement avoid interpreting such behaviors as requiring more aggression or use of force and, instead, guide officers to respond in a more informed and appropriate manner.
- Policies and programs that incorporate implicit bias training into police training at all levels. Implicit bias training helps police officers mitigate racial bias during community interactions, encourage respectful encounters, and promote constitutional policing with the goal of building trust with communities.
- Programs that collect data on deaths and use-of-force incidents by law enforcement. Specifically, we encourage you to support the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Use-of-Force Data Collection Program, which expands the Uniform Crime Report Program to include use of force incidents by law enforcement resulting in serious bodily injury. The Death in Custody Reporting Act, which was signed into law in 2014, must also be properly implemented.
- Support the Collaborative Reform Initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The Collaborative Reform Initiative is a valuable program that offers technical assistance and operational support to local police departments to improve policing practices, transparency, professionalism, accountability, community inclusion, and procedural fairness. The Collaborative Reform Initiative enables police departments—which participate on a voluntary basis—to sustain long-term, significant reforms in a manner that improves trust between police and communities and meets the public safety goals of residents. The work of DOJ's Civil Rights Division around policing must also be supported and sustained.

During Police Week, we urge you to prioritize federal programs, funding, and legislation that support the above polices, rather than legislation that would undercut partnerships with our local communities. We invite you to reach out to us about the above priorities and ask that you support legislation and funding that champion these important issues.

Sincerely,

Chief Hassan Aden (Ret.), Greenville (NC) Police Department

Chief James Abbott, West Orange (NJ) Police Department

Officer John Breckinridge (Ret.), Manchester (NH) Police Department

Officer Nick Bucci (Ret.), New Jersey State Police

Sheriff Jerry L. Clayton, Washtenaw County (MI) Sherriff's Office

Captain James Davidsaver (Ret.), Lincoln (NE) Police Department

Deputy Chief Stephen Downing (Ret.), Los Angeles Police Department

Former Probation/Parole Officer and Corrections Counselor Shelley Fox-Loken, Oregon

Major Neill Franklin (Ret.), Baltimore and Maryland State Police Department

Officer Brian Gaughan (Ret.), Davenport, Iowa and Chicago

Lieutenant Commander Diane Goldstein (Ret.), Redondo Beach Police Department

Ron Hampton, Community Relations Officer, Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (Ret.); Blacks in Law Enforcement of America

Officer Karen Hawkes (Ret.), Massachusetts State Police

Former Federal Corrections Officer Regina Hufnagel, Boston, Massachusetts

Commissioner Terence Inch (Ret.), Hellam Township (PA) Police Department

Senior Patrol Officer Tim Johnson (Ret.), Madison (OH) Township Police Department

Commissioner George Kain, Ph.D, Ridgefield (CT) Board of Police Commissioners

Analyst Richard Kennedy (Ret.), Central Intelligence Agency

Chief Larry Kirk (Ret.), Old Monroe (MO) Police Department

Former Special Agent David Long, U.S. Department of Labor

Former Detective and Deputy Sheriff Nick Morrow, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Lieutenant Joanne Naughton (Ret.), New York Police Department

Chief Norm Stamper (Ret.), Seattle (WA) Police Department

Special Agent Ray Strack (Ret.), Department of Homeland Security, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Former Police Officer Silvestre Tanenbaum, Carrollton (TX) Police Department

Sergeant Carl Tennenbaum (Ret.), San Francisco Police Department

Former Detention Officer and Deputy Marshal Jason Thomas, Prowers County, Colorado

Detective James Trainum (Ret.), Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department

Deputy Sheriff Darren Ullmann, Cowlitz County (OR) Sheriff's Office

Federal Probation Officer LeRoy Washington (Ret.), Hawaii

Officer Jack Wilborn (Ret.), Glendale (AZ) Police Department

Detective Howard Wooldridge (Ret.), Michigan

***Affiliations listed for identification purposes only. The views of individual law enforcement officials do not necessarily reflect the views of their agencies or organizations.*