



June 24, 2020

RE: Vote Recommendation on the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (H.R. 7120) – VOTE YES

Dear Representative:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA (“AIUSA”), we recommend you vote YES on the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act ([H.R. 7120](#)). This bill is scheduled for a floor vote on June 25.

The persistence of police killings of Black people is a direct outgrowth of a law enforcement system that has shielded police abuses from accountability for decades. While AIUSA supports the Justice in Policing Act as a whole, we write to express our serious objections to the price tag associated with bill. In this moment, we strongly believe that the functions of this bill do not require new funding. Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed in March 2020, \$850 million was made available for law enforcement purposes to states, localities, and police departments. The CARES Act money is on top of the already \$547 million Congress appropriated for law enforcement in FY 2020.

Police shoot and kill about 1,000 people every year, with many more killed by other uses of force by police. Since George Floyd’s murder on May 25, 2020, thousands of protesters in every state have been demonstrating for police accountability and systemic change. All people have the right to survive a police encounter, to be safe, to live free from discrimination, and to enjoy equal protection of the law. These rights should not depend on race, color, or zip code.

Current laws on the use of force, including lethal force, do not adequately protect individuals from human right violations, including unlawful killing. AIUSA has found that all 50 states and the District of Columbia fail to meet international law and standards for the use of lethal force by police. Nine states and the District of Columbia have not enacted any laws on the use of lethal force by law enforcement.

In order to remedy this long, systemic problem, Congress must enact more restrictive national standards that are in line with international law and standards. This includes provisions ensuring that force is only used when necessary and proportionate, and that lethal force be reserved as a last resort, against an imminent threat of death or serious injury, and after exhausting all other methods.

Congress Should Pass Legislation to Establish Police Accountability and to Root Out Systemic Racial Bias Embedded in Policing.

AIUSA urges Congress to swiftly pass meaningful policing legislation that advances the following eight priorities:

- Create a federal standard that the use of deadly force be reserved for only when necessary to protect life, as a last resort after exhausting reasonable alternatives, and call on states to implement this legal standard or risk losing federal funding; require the use of de-



escalation techniques and that officers warn subjects before resorting to force, as in the PEACE Act ([H.R. 4359](#)), as included in the Justice in Policing Act;

- Prohibit racial and religious profiling, with robust data collection on police-community encounters and law enforcement activities. Data should capture all demographic categories and be disaggregated;
- Prohibit neck- and chokeholds. Prohibit all maneuvers that restrict the flow of blood or oxygen to the brain, including neck holds, chokeholds, and similar excessive force, deeming the use of such force a federal civil rights violation;
- Demilitarize the police. Eliminate the federal 1033 program that facilitates the transfer of military equipment to law enforcement;
- Prohibit the use of no-knock warrants, especially for drug searches;
- Stop reckless behavior by police. Change the mens rea requirement of 18 U.S.C. Sec. 242 from willfulness to recklessness, permitting prosecutors to successfully hold law enforcement accountable for the deprivation of civil rights and civil liberties;
- Develop a national public database of police actions that is accessible to all and would cover all police agencies in the United States and its territories; and
- End the qualified immunity doctrine that prevents police from being held legally accountable when they violate people's Constitutional rights, and enact a similar mechanism for holding federal law enforcement officers accountable, too.

Congress is long overdue in passing legislation that delivers true transformation in policing and public safety. We urge Congress to pass the Justice in Policing Act. For questions or additional information, please contact Kristina Roth at kroth@aiusa.org at 202-945-2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Lin".

Joanne Lin
National Director
Advocacy & Government Affairs
Amnesty International USA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristina M Roth".

Kristina Roth
Senior Program Officer
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