



June 29, 2021

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen SOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen SOB
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

Recently, the Senate passed Juneteenth legislation to ensure it would finally become a federal holiday; however, bills for advancing voting rights, economic justice, anti-lynching, and ending police brutality are yet to be voted on and in most instances, even debated. While symbolism is important, so is substance.

Despite the efforts of many in the federal government to affect meaningful change, like attempting to move The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act through Congress, millions of our fellow citizens woke up this morning, got ready for work or school and left their homes wondering if they'll survive the day. Their crime? Being Black in a country controlled by a racist, militarized police force that behaves with impunity, hiding behind an outmoded Qualified Immunity doctrine that has allowed them to grow more violent and deadly by the hour.

The elimination of qualified immunity should not come at the expense of failing to address Section 242 (b), which makes it a crime for an officer to willfully deprive a person of their constitutional rights. While it has been suggested by some that an effort to eliminate the legal doctrine of qualified immunity will necessitate the removal of Section 242 provisions, this is wholly unacceptable. Both provisions – which would address *both* criminal and civil liability – are required for authentic police accountability.

The undersigned are members of United Justice Coalition (UJC) and we are here to tell you that we demand an end to militarized policing. We demand a comprehensive accountability package that includes the following:

- Meaningful federal legislative reform that includes ending “Qualified Immunity” for good;
- Meaningful federal legislation that addresses criminal liability in Section 242 (b); and
- Passing the George Floyd Act without delay and without eliminating key police accountability provisions.

Authentic reform requires hearing from the families who have been traumatized by police brutality and murder for decades by creating a clear, strong federal standard for police in OUR communities.

“Police reform” undersells what is required to stamp out this enduring injustice. We need you to work towards federal review of all instances of use of force by state and local police. It is time to dismantle the qualified immunity doctrine that prevents any direct financial accountability for law enforcement officers acting under the color of law, effectively prohibiting victims and their survivors from receiving the very least society can provide: restitution.

Ending qualified immunity incentivizes and forces law enforcement municipalities to root out violence and corruption. While no dollar figure can replace a loved one, it is at least the beginning of a path toward healing. This principle is non-negotiable to members of our organization, many of whom have experienced the loss associated with law enforcement’s violent impunity.

This is not about politics, but about people - Americans - and we have attached real life stories of loss so you can see the real loss that our families and our communities have suffered. We need you to lead and, more importantly, we need you and your colleagues in Congress to see the fire that has been burning out of control in our communities. We don’t need

louder sirens, or a commission to discuss the destruction the blaze is causing. We need you to take the necessary steps to extinguish it and then to begin the painful process of eliminating its root cause. The House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. It is time for the Senate to take action and pass meaningful legislation. We need action now.

Respectfully,

Allisa Charles-Findley, Sister of Botham Jean
Botham Jean Foundation; Sisters of the Movement

Jason Flom
Lava Media, LLC

Dr. Tiffany Crutcher, Sister of Terence Crutcher
Terence Crutcher Foundation

K.C. Fox
Sisters of the Movement

Angella & Danroy Henry, Parents of DJ Henry
DJ Henry Dream Fund

Tamika Mallory
Until Freedom

Michelle Kenney, Mother of Antwon Rose II
Antwon Rose II Foundation

S. Lee Merritt, Esq.

Desiree Perez, CEO
Roc Nation/Team Roc

Lenard "Charlamagne tha God" McKelvey

Jonathan S. Abady

Carmen Perez
Activist & Movement Leader

Susan Taylor Batten

Angela T. Rye, Esq.

Julie Ciccolini
NACDL

Topeka K. Sam
The Ladies of Hope Ministries, Inc.

Marcia L. Dyson
Women's Global Institute

Shelley Stewart III

Michael Eric Dyson

Eboni K. Williams

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