



POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

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Washington, D.C.

To: Michigan Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives

Fr: The Police Officers Association of Michigan (POAM)

Dt: May 5, 2021

Re: Federal Police Reform Legislation

Dear U.S. Representatives and Senators:

The *Police Officers Association of Michigan (POAM)* is Michigan's largest law enforcement organization and represents over 12,500 rank-and-file officers, first responders and associated law enforcement personnel across Michigan, located in every region, county and Congressional District.

I am writing to convey our organizations' thoughts regarding ongoing discussions on police reform legislation. When reviewing police reform, we urge your careful consideration on the impact on Michigan's communities and their law enforcement officers.

Members of Michigan's law enforcement and our organization support improving policing practices, particularly regarding ensuring greater transparency, accountability, and training in law enforcement. We have consistently advocated and supported these measures to make policing better and improve our profession. We have worked in Lansing and Washington to achieve those goals and continue to advocate on behalf of these objectives.

We often hear the calls for further reform and additional transparency from community members and elected officials. We will continue these conversations and believe there are areas we can agree on to build community trust and relationships, improve policing, and move forward together as a state and nation.

One of the areas that we believe is often misunderstood and a major concern to front-line officers is the principal of *qualified immunity*. It is an essential legal provision for government officials, including law enforcement, which balances the public interest and helps build trust in public officials, including police officers. We know it is particularly essential in recruiting and retaining quality police officers. *Qualified immunity* protects a police officer from civil liability in performance of their official responsibilities and if their conduct does not violate clearly established laws or constitutional rights which should be known to a reasonable officer. Those that act incompetently or who knowingly violate the law are not protected by *qualified immunity* and face legal repercussions. The doctrine is necessary to protect officers acting reasonably while ensuring frivolous lawsuits to not proceed against officers.

Michigan Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives
May 5, 2021
Page 2

In the end, we believe we all share the same goals of improving trust between citizens and law enforcement, decreasing the number of deadly encounters with peace officers, funding important public safety needs of agencies across the state, and ensuring our officers in Michigan are some of the best-trained in the country. Let's continue our partnership and working together as these bills progress in Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Grabowski,

Legislative Director, POAM