



August 11, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
House Majority Leader
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
House Judiciary Chair
2142 Rayburn
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Clyburn
House Majority Whip
H-329, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, Chair Nadler, Whip Clyburn, and other Members of Congress,

On behalf of the 38 undersigned organizations committed to fighting for civil rights, racial justice, equal opportunity, and genuine safety for all communities, we stand together to urge the House of Representatives not to advance H.R. 6448/S. 3860, Invest to Protect Act, or H.R. 6375, COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act. If enacted, these bills will only expand and entrench a policing bureaucracy that lacks accountability and respect for our fundamental liberties while failing to advance community

safety. Instead, Congress should work with our organizations to advance a comprehensive agenda with policies rooted in public health, human rights, and the evidence-based investments that will truly keep people safe.

We believe that community safety is a critical priority but continuing to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into discretionary grants for police departments is not the answer. Throughout its 25-year history, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program has been plagued by a lack of accountability, and there is little evidence that investments in the program have improved public safety. Cities that received COPS grants, such as Baltimore, Cleveland, and Charleston, have also had serious cases of police misconduct.ⁱ At the same time, the COPS program has received significant funding — \$14 billionⁱⁱ since 1994, including \$512 millionⁱⁱⁱ last year and another \$100 million^{iv} last month.

The bills being considered disburse even more public dollars without the public accountability for the outcomes we know are needed. They do not address the unaccountability of COPS funding, reduce unconstitutional policing and arrests for social problems and mental health issues, or incentivize meaningful accountability for police misconduct. Moreover, research shows that greater investment in policing and jailing people does not yield actual public safety results. On average, police officers spend only about 4 percent of their time handling violent crime.^v An analysis by *The Washington Post* found no correlation between spending on police and crime rates.^{vi} Even the U.S. Department of Justice has admitted that “increased police strength alone does not make a difference” when it comes to crime.^{vii}

By contrast, the data *is* clear that increased police presence makes all too many people less safe, especially individuals who are low-income, Black, Brown, Indigenous, LGBTQ, disabled, or otherwise part of any marginalized group. Department of Justice data shows that use of force complaints increase when police force size increases.^{viii} And estimates suggest that police officers kill more than 1,000 people each year and seriously injure far more, with these harms disproportionately affecting Black, Brown, and Indigenous individuals.^{ix} Moreover, while the United States is the global leader in policing and incarceration, incarcerating some 2 million people^x — a highly disproportionate number of whom are Black, Brown, and Indigenous^{xi} — we are no safer than our peer nations.^{xii} Our rate of gun violence is dramatically higher than comparable nations and our epidemic of mass shootings — of which there have been at least 391 so far this year — remains a critical threat.^{xiii}

The legislation now being considered would not address these deficiencies or deliver the safety that our communities urgently need. By contrast, a wealth of evidence supports the fact that certain preventative measures, such as violence prevention programs and other community investments, can dramatically improve safety outcomes — while avoiding the devastating consequences of a default reliance on policing and incarceration to solve societal problems. Moreover, these measures are aimed at preventing violence and harm *before* they happen, which ultimately helps to keep all our families and communities significantly safer.

Our more holistic approach is also well supported. Polling has continued to show that these are the real solutions Americans are clamoring for. A majority of Americans say that [spending on police](#) in their area should either stay the same or decrease. Overwhelmingly, communities want investments in genuine community safety, with 65 percent of likely voters in support of [reallocating some portions of law](#)

[enforcement budgets](#) to support such non-police first responder programs, including 80 percent of Democrats, 52 percent of Republicans, and 60 percent of independent or third party voters.

The current moment presents pressing threats that warrant even greater scrutiny of these programs. The recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the rush as states impose further restrictions^{xiv} will bring police, prosecutors, and other criminal-legal actors deeper into our lives and our most private decisions.^{xv} These legal shifts call for greater vigilance and scrutiny when considering policing bills — especially when some state lawmakers are already seeking to punish and disempower any prosecutors who commit to not pursuing this criminalization agenda.^{xvi} Moreover, as our nation struggles to process hate-fueled attacks, it is noteworthy that the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)^{xvii} and the House Oversight Committee^{xviii} have both documented the ties between policing and white supremacist movements. These ties require further investigation and firm action by Congress — not dramatic and unaccountable infusions of new federal resources.

For these reasons, we request that the House not advance these bills. Even if small tweaks are made to these bills, such changes do not fundamentally alter this flawed approach. Instead, we ask that members work with our organizations to craft a bold, evidence-based, comprehensive agenda for safety and police accountability that genuinely works for all communities — an agenda grounded in a reimagining of safety institutions; non-carceral crisis response and violence intervention; expansion of voluntary treatment capacity for mental health and problematic substance use; safe and affordable housing; economic stability; youth programs; teachers and high-quality, supportive education; and accessible community spaces. This affirmative agenda represents our vision of safety. Moreover, it provides a real pathway to the genuine and equitable safety that our communities crave.

We look forward to discussing this forward-looking public safety agenda that protects all communities with you ahead of Congress' return in September. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us regarding any items uplifted here. Please contact: Thea Sebastian, Director of Policy, Civil Rights Corps (thea@civilrightscorps.org); Sakira Cook, Co-Interim Vice President of Campaigns, Color of Change (sakira.cook@colorofchange.org); Kristina Roth, Senior Policy Associate, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) (krth@naacpldf.org); Aamra Ahmad, Senior Policy Counsel, ACLU (aahmad@aclu.org); Chloé White, Senior Policy Counsel, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (white@civilrights.org); Patrice Willoughby, Vice President of Policy and Legislative Affairs, NAACP (pwilloughby@naacpnet.org); Joi Chaney, Executive Director, Washington Bureau and Senior Vice President, Policy and Advocacy, National Urban League (jchaney@nul.org); Ebonie Riley, Senior Vice President of Policy and Strategic Partnerships, National Action Network (eriley@nationalactionnetwork.net); or Dr. Delisa Saunders, Senior Policy Advisor, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable (bwrpolicy@nbcpc.org) .

Sincerely,

1. American Civil Liberties Union
2. ACRE
3. Advancement Project National Office
4. All of Us or None Texas: A Project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

5. Alliance of Families for Justice
6. The Arc of the U.S.
7. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
8. Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
9. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation
10. Black Lives Matter PAC
11. Black Women’s Roundtable
12. Center for Policing Equity
13. Civil Rights Corps
14. Color Of Change
15. Detroit Justice Center
16. Drug Policy Alliance
17. Equal Justice USA
18. Fayetteville Police Accountability Community Taskforce
19. Government Information Watch
20. Grassroots Leadership
21. Indivisible
22. Justice Strategies
23. LatinoJustice PRLDEF
24. Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
25. LIVE FREE
26. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
27. Madre Tierra Collective
28. MILPA
29. NAACP
30. NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
31. National Action Network
32. National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
33. National Council of Negro Women
34. National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)
35. National Urban League
36. NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
37. People's Advocacy Institute
38. Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund

ⁱ Wiley, Maya. “100,000 New Cops? There Are Far Better Ways to Fight Crime.” *New Republic*. Aug. 5, 2022. <https://newrepublic.com/article/167293/democrats-police-funding-bill-100000-new-cops>.

ⁱⁱ “About the COPS Office.” *US Department of Justice, Office of Community Policing*. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/aboutcops>.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Washington Report.” *National Association of Police Organizations*. March 11, 2022. <https://napo.org/washington-report/latest-news-updates/napo-proud-announce-2022-top-cops-awards-winners-congress-passes-fy-2022-omnibus-spending-package-fentanyl-scheduling-extended-f/#:~:text=Within%20the%20COPS%20Office%2C%20Congress%20funded%20the%20COPS,for%20grants%20under%20the%20STOP%20School%20Violence%20Act>.

^{iv} S.2938 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

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- ^v Asher, Jeff, and Ben Horwitz. “How Do the Police Actually Spend Their Time?” *The New York Times*. June 19, 2020. www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/upshot/unrest-police-time-violent-crime.html?smid=tw-share.
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- ^{vii} Rouse, John Jay. “The Relationship between Police Presence and Crime Deterrence.” *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*. Vol. 58, no. 2, 1985. Pp. 118–131.
- ^{viii} Hickman, Matthew J., and Jane E. Poore. “National Data on Citizen Complaints About Police Use of Force.” *Criminal Justice Policy Review*. Vol. 27, no. 5, 2015, pp. 455–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403415594843>.
- ^{ix} “The Counted: People Killed by Police in the United States – Interactive.” *The Guardian*. June 1, 2015. www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database.
- ^x “Mass Incarceration.” *American Civil Liberties Union*. Feb. 15, 2022. www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/mass-incarceration.
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- ^{xii} Aizenman, Nurith. “Gun Violence Deaths: How the U.S. Compares with the Rest of the World.” *NPR*. May 25, 2022. www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/03/24/980838151/gun-violence-deaths-how-the-u-s-compares-to-the-rest-of-the-world.
- ^{xiii} “Gun Violence Archive.” *Gun Violence Archive*. 2022. www.gunviolencearchive.org/.
- ^{xiv} Feuer, Alan. “The Texas Abortion Law Creates a Kind of Bounty Hunter. Here's How It Works.” *The New York Times*. Sep. 10, 2021. www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/us/politics/texas-abortion-law-facts.html.
- ^{xv} Ibid.
- ^{xvi} Geidner, Chris. “With Abortion Bans, a Bewildering New Reality for Courts and Law Enforcement: We unpack nine common questions on who is enforcing the new restrictions, and who could mitigate some of the harms.” *Bolts Magazine*. July 8, 2022. <https://boltsmag.org/enforcement-abortion-bans-nine-questions/>. See also Cortono, Steve, “DeSantis suspends Tampa prosecutor who took stance against criminalizing abortion providers.” *CNN*. Aug. 4, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/04/politics/desantis-suspends-prosecutor/index.html>.
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- ^{xviii} House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. “Confronting Violent White Supremacy (Part IV): White Supremacy in the Blue—The Infiltration of Local Police Departments.” September 29, 2020. <https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-to-hold-hearing-on-infiltration-of-white-supremacist-views-and>.