



May 18, 2021

Senator Anthony Portantino
District Director Talin Mangioglu
Glendale District Office
601 East Glenoaks Suite 210
Glendale, CA 91207

Via Email: Talin.Mangioglu@sen.ca.gov

Re: In Support of SB-2

Dear Senator Portantino:

The time is now for us to act. No more kneeling and social media posts. We've had enough of the performative acts.

—*Senator Steven Bradford*

Care First South Pasadena came together in the wake of George Floyd's murder with a desire for a more just and inclusive community. We are a committee of residents working to reimagine public safety and reallocate city dollars to reflect our community's priorities. Among our objectives are increased transparency and accountability for the South Pasadena Police Department. Along with our coalition partners Black Lives Matter South Pasadena, the Anti-Racism Committee of South Pasadena, and the South Pasadena Tenants Union, we are the leading local voice for social justice and proud to be active in the civil rights struggle of our time.

We are here to push for a strong measure of police accountability that is already on your desk. We urge you to vote yes on SB-2.

One month ago jurors in Minneapolis were asked by prosecutors to cut through the noise and do what justice makes plain. They were asked to believe their eyes and follow the guidelines of common sense and basic humanity. Jurors listened and found Derek Chauvin guilty of murder. Millions rejoiced. Then came perspective, conversations about the slam-dunk nature of the Chauvin case and the sad reality that it takes a brazenly monstrous act captured entirely on bystander video to get so much as an indictment. This was not to be representative of police accountability in America.

Under an effective system of accountability, George Floyd would have encountered a different officer on May 25, 2020, and lived to tell about it. Instead he got Derek Chauvin, who three years prior beat an unarmed 14-year-old Black boy in the head with a flashlight, choked him

unconscious and knelt on him for eight minutes while he complained he couldn't breathe.¹ Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke would not have had occasion to fire 16 bullets into Laquan McDonald had he lost his badge in 2008 for injuring another Black man—to the point of requiring surgery—and costing the city of Chicago \$530,000 in civil damages and legal fees.²

Between the murder and the verdict we saw support for Black Lives Matter splashed across media, yet scant policy directed at the root cause: state-sanctioned police violence against Black Americans. Passing SB-2 is one way California can put its money where its mouth is. Those officers found to falsify reports, abuse their power, use excessive force, demonstrate bias, participate in law enforcement gangs, or commit sexual assault must lose their certification and be barred from future employment in law enforcement. This goes without saying, but we are glad our legislature has begun to say it.

As acknowledged in the text of SB-2, California police departments have some of the highest rates of killings in the nation, with three out of four victims being people of color. Yet California is one of only four states without a decertification process for bad cops. This is not who we are. If California will not exemplify a higher standard of racial justice and 21st Century policing, who will?

SB-2 will surely be popular once signed into law. In a 2021 Cal State Fullerton poll, only 32% of respondents agreed that police are held accountable. 75% believed deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police are signs of a broader problem and not isolated incidents. And 88% favored decertifying officers for misconduct.³

Police officers are entrusted with tremendous power and latitude unequalled outside the arena of war. And too often our communities are turned into war zones where de-escalation is discarded in a sure bet on impunity. In recent years, smartphone video has shown us a chasm between truth and consequences. Centuries into our nation's history we are seeing that fears about unchecked power coupled with lethal force are founded. To the point of multiple killings in a week's time. Ask Japan or Britain how many they have in a year.

Enough. It needn't be this way. We have legislatures we have entrusted as keepers of the collective right mind. Those chosen by ordinary people to protect the rights and lives of ordinary people. Implied is the expectation that you will summon such resources as you command when violence is on the march. When it marches under the color of law, masses will gather and demand that you summon courage in those chambers where the right thing too often sits like a boulder at the base of an incline.

1 "After Chauvin's conviction for Floyd murder, DOJ weighs charging him for 2017 incident involving Black teen," ABC News, April 23, 2021.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/chauvins-conviction-floyd-murder-doj-weighs-charging-2017/story?id=77254006>

2 "Chicago officer had history of complaints before Laquan McDonald shooting," CNN, November 26, 2015.

<https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/25/us/jason-van-dyke-previous-complaints-lawsuits/index.html>

3 Gardiner, C. (2021, March). CALSPEAKS: Californians' Views on Police and Police Reform. Fullerton, CA: Center for Public Policy.

Sen. Anthony Portantino
May 18, 2021

These are difficult times for so many in our country who crave justice and security in police encounters. We trust that you see as much hope in this bill as we do. Please put your vote and the weight of your conscience behind SB-2.

Sincerely,

Care First South Pasadena: Matthew Barbato
Ella Hushagen
William Kelly
John Srebalus
Helen Tran