

June 2, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Minority Leader Schumer:

Thank you for moving forward on a robust legislative response to the long-standing problem of police violence and misconduct. Now is the time to implement the far-reaching reforms that will protect people and communities that have suffered this violence for far too long.

As we consider a legislative approach, I request that the following items be included in the final proposal:

- Amend federal civil rights laws to allow more effective prosecution of police misconduct by changing the standard from willfulness to recklessness.
- Abolish “qualified immunity,” so police officers are held civilly liable for abuses.
- Prohibit the transfer of offensive military equipment to police departments.
- Strip federal funds from departments that violate civil rights.
- Create a federal model policing program that emphasizes de-escalation, non-lethal force and culturally competent policing that would be tied to enhanced federal funding for communities that implement the programs and decreased/eliminated funding for those that do not. As part of this effort to modernize and humanize police departments we need to enhance the recruitment pool by ensuring that the resources are available to pay wages that will attract the top tier officers we need to do the difficult work of policing.
- Provide funding to states and municipalities to create civilian corps of unarmed first responders to supplement law enforcement, such as social workers, EMTs, and trained mental health professionals, who can handle order maintenance violations, mental health emergencies, and low-level conflicts to aid police officers.
- Require agencies to make records of police misconduct publicly available.
- Require all jurisdictions that receive federal grant funding to establish independent police conduct review boards that are broadly representative of the community and that have the authority to refer deaths that occur at the hands of police or in police custody to federal authorities for investigation. In addition, the boards would be authorized to report to federal authorities other types of abuses by police including patterns of misconduct. This would be supplemental to current federal authority to commence investigations. Clearly, we need to enhance federal funding for such investigations.

I believe each of these proposals will contribute greatly to the eradication of police violence in this country. Thank you again for your consideration and I look forward to continuing to work with you and our colleagues to seriously address an intolerable situation in this country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bernard Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bernard" and last name "Sanders" clearly legible.

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator