

Minnesota Business Partnership urges lawmakers to adopt policing reforms that address police misconduct and increase accountability and transparency

The brutal death of George Floyd last month at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer horrified all Minnesotans and set off an unprecedented wave of civil unrest across the country and the world. It was the latest in a long line of incidents in which law enforcement officers have committed senseless acts of violence against African Americans.

In many ways, Minnesotans enjoy a remarkable quality of life. Our economic prosperity, educational success, and cultural assets are enviable. But Minnesota also has among the largest racial economic and education gaps in the nation. And despite our state's prosperity, African Americans and other people of color have been denied the justice and opportunity that many of us take for granted.

We must do better. Members of the Minnesota Business Partnership believe that true reform must be focused against two critical objectives:

- **Prevention** – implement needed policies and practices to significantly reduce the possibility of unacceptable police behavior in the future and strong disciplinary measures to ensure the discipline and removal of those who engage in such behavior.
- **Justice** – reform investigations, prosecutions and other measures to ensure that perpetrators of racist behavior are held accountable and that the behavior is not repeated

The members of the Minnesota Business Partnership are committed to creating a state that embraces diversity and inclusion, and where all citizens are respected and heard. And we are committed to working with lawmakers and communities of color to reform policing practices to ensure that police receive the training necessary to prevent biased policing and inappropriate use of force and are held accountable when they do occur. We understand that this is not a “one and done” exercise – it will require hard work, and some reforms will require consensus-building over time. Moreover, although this Statement is focused on reforms of policing practices, it cannot be viewed in isolation, and we must also work to address the broader need to advance social and racial justice in our society. The Partnership is prepared to engage vigorously in this process and are committed to stay engaged for the long haul.

When lawmakers convene for a special session this week, we urge them to pass the reforms below, the substance of which are derived from a February 2020 report by the [State of Minnesota Working Group on Police-Involved Deadly Force Encounters](#). The Working Group, which spent nine months conducting hearings and taking testimony from the public, was co-chaired by Attorney General Keith Ellison and Department of Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington, and comprised of a diverse membership including law enforcement, mental health, academic, and community leaders.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage all police agencies to adopt use-of-force policies that make sanctity of life a core organizational value.
- Require law enforcement agencies to implement an Early Intervention Program (EIP) for officers and dispatchers that is designed to identify problem behaviors at the earliest possible stage so that intervention and support can be offered in a non-disciplinary manner.

- Expand resources and increase statewide awareness of existing resources, to improve the mental health and wellness of first responders and dispatchers.
- Require law enforcement agencies to adopt data practices that promote transparency, openness, and accountability. This includes collecting, analyzing, and publishing data about the nature of police-community interactions, use of force, and police-involved deadly force encounters.
- Create an independent and specialized investigation unit within the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) with the authority to investigate all officer-involved shootings and uses of force that result in death or severe bodily injury.
- Work with the Attorney General and the Minnesota County Attorneys Association to enable the Attorney General's Office to be supportive and engaged around deadly-force encounters in terms of expertise, resources, conflicts, jurisdiction, or other issues.
- Direct the Department of Public Safety to work with law enforcement associations, police unions, local officials, and community leaders to promote more effective models of community policing.
- Increase state-provided law enforcement training funding where appropriate.
- Increase police training on interactions with African Americans and people of color.
- Increase police training on interactions with people with disabilities, and people experiencing a mental-health crisis during interactions with law enforcement.
- Explore the non-disciplinary use of body camera video and simulator scenarios to identify training to improve officer performance through proactive coaching/mentoring and training in de-escalation tactics.
- Encourage local law enforcement agencies to work with community partners to engage them in the standards, expectations and recruitment of officers that know their local communities and increase the diversity of their workforce.
- Ensure that all law enforcement agencies are trained in de-escalation tactics and skills in order to reduce use-of-force, especially when responding to persons in crisis.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the above recommendations derived from the Working Group, we urge lawmakers to consider the following recently proposed reforms:

- Repeal the state law that mandates binding arbitration for law enforcement officers accused of misconduct.
- Change laws governing collective bargaining agreements that impede discipline of officers who seriously betray the public trust.
- Enhance screening to prevent unacceptable applicants for positions in law enforcement from being hired and ensure clear and enforced guidelines that define acceptable and unacceptable behavior and policing tactics.

It is important to recognize that police reform is not a partisan issue, nor is it an indictment of the countless law enforcement officers who perform their job every day with bravery, integrity, and compassion. This is about building the trust of our communities and holding people accountable who seriously betray the public trust. As business leaders, we look forward to working with members of the community, Governor Walz and lawmakers of both parties to build a better, safer, more just future for all Minnesotans.

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