

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM
ALEJANDRA Y. CASTILLO
CEO, YWCA USA

THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 10, 2020



YWCA USA
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Dear Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Jordan and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of YWCA USA and our over 200 local associations in 45 states and the District of Columbia, thank you for hosting today's hearing titled *Oversight Hearing on Policing Practices and Law Enforcement Accountability* and accepting this statement for the hearing record.

We submit this letter today to emphasize our support for the Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (H.R.7120/ S.3912) as well as our appreciation to Congress for taking an important first step toward police accountability. Like many of you, I am shocked, outraged, and heartbroken over the tragic and senseless murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and so many other Black Americans who have been killed at the hands of police. The raw emotions that continue to play out across our TVs, through our social media feeds and in our communities have seeped into my mind and seared themselves into my memory as haunting cries for humanity.

And yet, these feelings are just a small fraction of the pain so many of my Black brothers and sisters are feeling across America. Since our nation's founding, our country has turned a blind eye to systemic patterns of police brutality, violence, and racism inflicted upon Black people. From the enslavement of Black people at the very origins of our nation to the murder of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to present day, the public protests currently playing out across the country reflect generations of compounding injustice, fear, emotion—and inaction.

As a national organization with a longstanding mission to eliminate racism and empower women that is also the nation's largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers, YWCA approaches these issues from a unique vantage point. We both see the moral imperative for change demanded in this moment *and* recognize the critical role that law enforcement so often plays in protecting women and children from domestic and sexual violence. We see the ways in which Black women and other women of color are criminalized, profiled, and harmed by systems, laws, and policies that are *supposed* to provide support and protection—and at the same time we rely on those very same systems, laws, and policies to aid so many of the

more than 2.3 million women, children, and families that we serve each year. We see clearly how racism shows up in all facets of life, and that the very same law enforcement, social service, education, healthcare, and court systems that in some situations protect our clients are also deeply entrenched with systemic and structural racism, and that they fuel racially disparate contact with child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems.

It is from this vantage point that we unequivocally affirm our long-standing and valued partnership with law enforcement, but we cannot and must not allow another Black life to be taken from us by police violence.



YWCA CALLS FOR ACTION

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YWCA stands with and supports the millions of Americans who are peacefully protesting in communities across the country to express their pain, frustration, and disillusionment with a justice system that perpetuates structural racism. We join those protesting on the frontlines to demand *real* solutions *now*. The days of blue-ribbon committees, commissions, and task forces to explore issues are over. We must not fall into the trap of band-aid answers and calling for further study that inevitably results in no action being taken.

As a nation, we have decades of studies, recommendations, and best practices to draw on. The time to act is now. And today, YWCA calls on Congress to implement concrete solutions to address deeply embedded structures and systems that give racism its malignant hold on our communities.

The Justice in Policing Act takes important, foundational steps to implement long overdue police accountability measures that get to the underlying systems, policies, and structures that reinforce and embed racism in our justice system. YWCA is committed to the success of the Justice in Policing Act and is particularly grateful for the following provisions, which are of particular importance to us:

- A ban on racial profiling by federal, state, and local law enforcement;
- Mechanisms to strengthen pattern and practice investigations by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and state attorneys general;
- The creation of a national police misconduct registry;
- Limitations on the transfer of military equipment to local law enforcement agencies; and
- Improved data collection on the use of force by law enforcement.

While the Justice in Policing Act is a significant first step toward instituting much needed reform, Congress must not stop here.

Increasing federal resources and investments in schools, child care, and early learning, trauma-informed care, mental and behavioral health, affordable housing, job training, and other programs and services that have long been underfunded in Black and Brown communities are essential steps in strengthening communities. And building communities that support people is key to creating justice and wellbeing. Such a shift in funding priorities would directly address deeply embedded inequities that perpetuate racial injustice, and reform the systems, structures, and policies that are the backdrop against which the crisis of police violence and brutality is playing out.



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We stand at a critical moment in time—and we cannot and will not let it be a passing moment. The time to take bold action and speak out against injustice is now and we will not be silent. As you consider the Justice in Policing Act, your actions will not only be judged by your words, but more importantly by the votes you cast as elected representatives of the people. These are the times that will define the soul of our nation and bear testament to the humanity and moral values of this generation.

We thank the Committee for investigating these critical issues and look forward to working with you to achieve equity and justice for all. As the Justice in Policing Act advances toward passage, YWCA remains committed to working with you to strengthen it and ensure real and meaningful change. Please do not hesitate to contact Pam Yuen, YWCA USA Government Relations Manager, at pyuen@ywca.org or 202-559-7022, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alejandra Y. Castillo".

Alejandra Y. Castillo, CEO YWCA USA