



DEAR CHAIRMAN PEREZ, PRESIDENT MARTIN, AND MEMBERS OF THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE:

We are a group of civil rights organizations, elected officials, faith leaders, academics, public defenders, and community led organizers who are writing to ask you to take immediate action to heal our American cities and foster a society where all people feel safe.


The current protests across the nation—in the aftermath of the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and Tony McDade—are just the latest signs of racism and of the all-too-apparent crisis in policing in America. Eric Garner. Michael Brown. Laquan McDonald. Sandra Bland. Jessica Williams. These police killings six years ago sparked protests across the country and birthed the Black Lives Matter movement. Six years later, however, not much has changed.

The solutions we need right now both to protect our safety and to rescue our democracy are ones that meet the scale of the problem. To respond to George Floyd's death, or Breonna Taylor's death, we must replace the questions about how to reform policing with questions about how to restrict the political influence of law enforcement unions, associations, and political action committees that undermine a broader vision for safety and justice in America.

Police budgets have ballooned so much that in many cities across the country policing gobbles up 40% or more of the city budget. Now more than ever, we need to invest in the services that will make our communities safe and healthy instead of funding police departments at the expense of these other vital functions. Yet, police unions have a long history of maintaining their power by exploiting fears and promoting the myth that more police equals less crime. This is the rhetoric used to push back from budget cuts that could mean more money to spend on housing, education, mental health treatment, or other services that can make communities safer while improving life outcomes for all.

Elected officials should be accountable to their communities, not special interest law enforcement unions that profit from arrests, incarceration, and supervision. Police departments are an armed wing of the government, and they exercise a monopoly on coercive force. The same people who wield discretionary coercive power should not be able to significantly influence how elected leaders shape the contours of that power. Our elected leaders should make decisions about what types of offenses should lead to arrest or incarceration based on safety—not on whether law enforcement unions donate to their re-election campaign.

When elected officials and those seeking office accept campaign donations from law enforcement groups that stand to gain from the expansion of our criminal legal system, they compromise public confidence in their policy decisions. We urge the Democratic Party, at the national, state, and local level, to publicly call upon endorsed candidates and elected officials to return any current gifts or donations tied to law enforcement unions, associations, and political action committees. We also urge Democrats to demand that every person endorsed by a local, state, or national party must first pledge to reject all donations from law enforcement unions or associations.



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