June 25, 2020

Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Room 932 LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Room 907 LOB
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Speaker Heastie and Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins:

We write to urge your respective houses to assist communities across the state in accessing the expertise needed to implement real changes to policing policy.

As you know, the Governor recently issued an Executive Order to mandate that every municipality with a police department in New York State develop a collaborative process to reform local policing practices. These reforms must be approved by local elected bodies prior to April 1, 2021.

While we applaud this effort, we are concerned that in most parts of the state the public lacks expertise regarding which reforms work, and just as importantly, which do not. This concern is exacerbated by the short time available to do this work.

To address this concern—and to empower communities—we respectfully request that the Assembly and Senate convene a joint hearing or other public process to call on academics, researchers, advocates, practitioners, and other experts to advise you on available research and practical experiences across the country that have proven effective at reforming local law enforcement agencies.

Our goal is not to tell communities what to do. Rather, by developing a broad database of effective policing reforms that communities can access, we seek to empower them to pick and choose those policies and practices that best fit their local needs.

We fear that if this information is not made available—and soon—communities will be at a significant disadvantage in this process. The result could be outcomes that do more to protect the status quo than the communities that suffer under current policing practices.

We stand ready to assist your respective houses in this work, and in the subsequent dissemination of the data that it produces.

Sincerely,
David R. Jones, Esq.,
Community Service Society

Jennifer Jones Austin
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA)
David C. Banks  
Eagle Academy

Courtney A. Bennett  
One Hundred Black Men

Juan Cartagena  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF

Dr. Hazel N. Dukes  
The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Robert Gangi  
Police Reform Organizing Project (PROP)

Henry Garrido  
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Dr. Seanelle Hawkins  
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Urban League of Westchester County, Inc.

Theresa Sanders  
Urban League of Long Island

cc:  Assemblyman Joseph Lentol, Chair, Assembly Codes Committee  
Senator Jamaal Bailey, Chair, Senate Codes Committee  
Assemblywoman Maritza Davila, Chair, Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force  
Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright, Chair, Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus  
Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Majority Leader  
Senator Michael Gianaris, Deputy Majority Leader  
Members, Black, Puerto Rican, and Asian Legislative Caucus  
Members, Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force