



**National
Urban League**

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*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

**NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON POLICING PRACTICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
September 19, 2019**

Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins, on behalf of the National Urban League and its 90 affiliates representing 300 communities in 36 states and the District of Columbia, we applaud you for holding this crucial oversight hearing on policing practices, focusing on the role of the federal government in addressing concerns about unconstitutional practices, enhancing accountability and developing 21st century policing practices.

The National Urban League is a historic 109-year old civil rights and urban advocacy organization. Driven to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights for our nation's marginalized populations, the National Urban League works towards economic empowerment and the elevation of the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. The National Urban League has improved the lives of more than two million people annually through direct service programs that are run by 90 local affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia.

Pursuing a comprehensive and effective approach to public safety through police accountability and trust between police departments and their communities is a high priority for the National Urban League, especially in our local affiliate communities that bear the brunt of police misconduct with lethal consequences. The federal government has and can continue to play a positive and key role in police/community relations. For example, Urban League affiliates in communities such as Ferguson (MO), Baltimore (MD), North Charleston (SC), Cleveland (OH), Chicago (IL), and other cities around the country where unarmed black and brown men and youth were shot and killed by the police have relied upon the work of the Civil Rights Division and the Community Relations Service (CRS) in the Department of Justice, especially under President Obama's Administration, to assist their communities as they worked to seek solutions to the anger and protests in their communities. However, the Trump Administration has called for essentially eliminating the CRS¹, and the Justice Department has abandoned all efforts to work with local police departments to address discriminatory practices in policing. Under then Attorney General Jeff Sessions, it rolled back its use of consent decrees that have historically been a crucial tool in the Justice Department's efforts to ensure constitutional and accountable policing. *The National Urban League joined the civil rights community in calling upon Attorney*

¹Becky Monroe, *An Attack on America's Peacemakers is an Attack on All of Us: on the Importance of Embracing Power of Communities and Rejecting the Trump Administration's Attempt to Eliminate the Community Relations Service*, 37Yale L. & Pol'y Rev.(2019). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylpr/vol37/iss1/5>

*General Barr to rescind the Sessions memo on consent decrees and insure the Department has the resources necessary to investigate and enforce existing consent decrees and settlement agreements.*²

In the wake of the tragic death of Eric Garner who was killed in an unlawful chokehold at the hands of NYC police, as well as other unarmed people of color who died violently at the hands of police officers, the National Urban League released in December 2014 a “10-Point Justice Plan” for police reform and accountability, elements of which were incorporated into the final report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing under the Obama Administration. Briefly, the 10 recommendations call for:

1. Widespread Use of Body Cameras and Dashboard Cameras
2. Broken Windows Reform and Implementation of 21st Century Community Policing Model
3. Review and Revision of Police Use of Deadly Force Policies
4. Comprehensive Retraining of All Police Officers
5. Comprehensive Review and Strengthening of Police Hiring Standards
6. Appointment of Special Prosecutors to Investigate Police Misconduct
7. Mandatory, Uniform FBI Reporting and Audit of Lethal Force Incidents Involving All Law Enforcement
8. Creation and Audit of National Citizen Database of Complaints Against Police
9. Adoption of a National Police Accreditation System for Mandatory Use by Law Enforcement to be Eligible for Federal Funds
10. National Comprehensive Anti-Racial Profiling Law

While the [attached copy of our 10-Point Plan](#) outlines in detail recommendations made during the Obama Administration, they remain relevant and adaptable to today’s circumstances in the Trump era. We offer them as a guideline for federal, state and local legislation that reflects lessons learned – and identifies new and effective solutions. For example, we urge the adoption of current key legislation that aims at ending excessive use of force such as the *PEACE Act of 2019*, and ending racial profiling in law enforcement such as the *End Racial and Religious Profiling Act of 2019*, among others.

The National Urban League looks forward to working with members of the Judiciary Committee to move forward on securing public safety and saving lives in our urban communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.

Attachment

²Letter to Attorney General Barr RE: The Department of Justice’s consent decree and criminal justice policies, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, June 4, 2019. Accessed at: <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/policy/letters/2019/Coalition-Letter-to-Attorney-General-Barr-on-Consent-Decrees-6-4-2019-Final.pdf>