



**Indianapolis
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January 27, 2021

***Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.***

House Ways and Means Committee
Indiana House of Representatives
Indiana General Assembly
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Dear Chair Brown and members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

The Indianapolis Urban League (IUL) thanks the committee for entertaining this testimony regarding the use of force provisions of this bill authored by Rep. Greg Steuerwald and his co-sponsors.

For over 50 years, IUL has advocated for the advancement of Black and marginalized communities. During this time, we have had specific concerns about the relationship between police and community. We have done our part by supporting community conversations on police and community relations and serving as an accountability partner for the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department. We've also encouraged members of our young professionals' auxiliary, known as the Exchange at the Indianapolis Urban League, to get involved on the issue of police and community relations, with at least one member of the auxiliary serving as the current chair of the Citizens' Police Complaint Board. We have advocated for de-escalation training locally and believe this is a best practice that should be part of the training curriculum and implemented statewide.

While heartened that the Indiana General Assembly (IGA) realizes the importance of regulating the use of force employed by police authorities in Indiana, IUL is particularly concerned with the chokehold provisions in the legislation and supports the observations and concerns of the ACLU of Indiana.

Specifically, IUL is particularly concerned that the definition of a chokehold is not sufficiently specific or embracing of all realities associated with the bill's current language: that attempted vascular restraints that can easily migrate to become deadly trachea restraints be include in the bill's definition of intentional airway obstruction: further editing the definition of a chokehold to include any restraint applied to the neck area that has the result of obstructing the airway or restricting blood-flow to the brain, regardless of intent: a statutory mandate requiring trained officers to adhere to the training; and a statutory mandate to direct officers to exhaust reasonable and available de-escalation efforts before resorting to use of force.

IUL strongly believes that the Committee and the IGA should be aware of what a major exhaustive study by IUPUI's POLIS Center on the use of force by IMPD between 2015 and 2019 revealed: The reported use of force by IMPD doubled between 2015 and 2019, with 873 such incidents in 2015 compared to 1,687 in 2019. Further, IMPD used force on 13 out of every 1,000 Black residents, compared to 5 out of every 1000 white residents. This means that police have used force on 13 out of every 1,000 Black residents since 2015, compared to only 5 out of every 1000 white residents. Police use force on Black residents at over 2.5 times the rate of white residents. Also, even though Black residents make up 28 percent of the population, 51 percent of the people on whom officers use force were Black. The police have used force on over 3,400 Black residents since 2015.

IUL believes that it is of paramount importance that the House Ways and Means Committee and the entire Indiana General Assembly are aware of these facts and that the increasingly pervasive nature of use of force against Hoosiers of color in Marion County is dangerously out of control.

We also remain concerned about the loopholes in a system that allows officers with problematic records to simply move to different jurisdictions. We believe that there should be a process for decertification of officers that violate the public's trust as well as a requirement for disclosure of pertinent information when an officer moves to a new policing jurisdiction.

There is also considerable concern within our community about body cameras and the current lack of any penalty for an officer turning off their body camera—particularly if this action occurs when concealing criminal activity.

Both nationally and locally, policing has experienced a severe decline in legitimacy from large segments of communities across the country. This has occurred in part because of a lack of trust of policing. The measures identified in HB 1006 are all positive steps toward achieving the objective of improving trust in police and community relations if adhered to consistently.

We thank the committee for receiving this testimony and are eager to work with this committee, the bill's authors, and other interested parties in perfecting this legislation as it moves through the legislature.

Respectfully,



Tony Mason
President & CEO