August 5, 2020

To Vermont's elected leaders, candidates for office, and other public officials,

We the undersigned organizations, our members and supporters, and Vermonters across the state know the safest communities do not have more police—they have more resources.

Vermonters want healthy, vibrant communities that support their needs—needs like health care, housing, childcare, education, and jobs. Instead, Vermont has prioritized investing in a punitive system that fails to deliver justice, spending more than $500 million annually on policing and prisons.

The result? Black and Brown residents are disproportionately stopped, searched, and imprisoned while the number of people killed by Vermont police increases every year. For too long, police have been allowed to police themselves, wielding enormous power with little meaningful oversight or accountability.

For these reasons, we call on you to fundamentally reimagine the role of police in our communities and commit to this ten-point action plan:

1. **End qualified immunity.** Vermont law shields officials who abuse their power from meaningful accountability. State lawmakers need to disincentivize police misconduct.
2. **Remove police from schools.** The presence of "school resource officers" (SROs) disproportionately harms students of color, students with disabilities, and low-income students. We must end the use of police in schools and invest in educational support services.

3. **Limit police involvement in low-level offenses.** We must prevent unnecessary police interactions which disproportionately impact people of color. That includes limiting police involvement in mental health crises, authority to conduct "consent"-based searches, and discretion to cite or arrest for petty offenses like "disorderly conduct."
4. **Ban police use of military-grade equipment and techniques.** Police militarization is unnecessary and dangerous. Giving police military equipment encourages the use of paramilitary tactics with civilians, including no-knock raids, as well as abusive "crowd control techniques," such as use of pepper spray, rubber bullets, tear gas, and sound canons.
5. **Prohibit use of new and invasive surveillance technologies**, including new surveillance technologies, advanced or autonomous weaponry, facial recognition software, and predictive policing technologies.
6. **Require appointment of independent counsel** outside of State's Attorneys and the Attorney General's office to review and prosecute police misconduct.
7. **Increase transparency** so that police misconduct cannot be concealed. That includes ending confidentiality for officer disciplinary records and other limits on public access to information.
8. **Require robust, systemwide data collection and analysis** from police, prosecutors, courts, parole board, and Department of Corrections to detect and eradicate systemic racism.
9. **Establish community control and authority over law enforcement**, including over police priorities, transparency, and discipline, and end collective bargaining agreement provisions that limit oversight and accountability.
10. **INVEST in communities, not policing.** It is time to demand that our laws and our investments match our values as Vermonters, and to affirm that **Black Lives Matter.** Local and state policymakers must prioritize people and communities, not policing and prisons.

We, our members, and supporters look forward to working with you to advance this agenda at the state and local levels. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Vermont
Justice for All
Migrant Justice
Outright Vermont
Pride Center of Vermont
Rights and Democracy
Vermont Branches of the NAACP
Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
Vermont Center for Independent Living
Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform
Vermont Human Rights Commission
Vermont Legal Aid
Vermont Public Interest Research Group
Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative