



Washington Association of  
**SHERIFFS &  
POLICE CHIEFS**

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June 25, 2020

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The Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor  
The Honorable Members of the Senate  
The Honorable Members of the House  
Legislative Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: WASPC Recommended Law Enforcement Reforms

Governor Inslee and Members of the Legislature:

Washington's Sheriffs and Police Chiefs recognize our role as leaders in law enforcement, and our responsibility to address racial inequality in our own communities. We acknowledge change is necessary and we endeavor to enact meaningful reform. We call for an approach that is evidence based, informed, comprehensive, and thoughtful. We must listen, learn, and then act to effect change. An important national conversation has begun about the role of law enforcement. This is an opportunity for us, as a state, to come together, to heal, and to improve.

Law enforcement has been asked to respond to emergency calls about social problems that may be better addressed through improved behavioral and community health resources. Many communities have already implemented and embraced these changes. As we stated in January 2019, *"WASPC strongly urges policy makers to fund and support a robust, wrap-around system for those with serious and untreated mental and behavioral health problems."*

Washington's law enforcement leaders are committed to working with policy makers, community groups, and other stakeholders to reform law enforcement practices. We wholeheartedly support a conversation about law enforcement that focuses on transparency and accountability in investigations, discipline, and misconduct, reducing barriers to discipline and termination, and ensuring a fair and more equitable criminal justice system.

In 2019, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) adopted a clear statement that recognizes implicit and institutional bias and discrimination exist in all aspects of society: criminal justice, education, housing, health care, finance, and more. We recognize the hurt, trauma, and anger caused by a history in which our profession has often failed to live up to our own ethical ideals, particularly in our relationships with Communities of Color.

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The following suggested reforms are presented based on the recommendations contained in often cited frameworks that guide our principles and practices, including:

- [The President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing](#)
- [WASPC's Principles for Public Trust, adopted January 2019](#)
- [Police Executive Research Forum Guiding Principles on Use of Force](#)
- [Campaign Zero Police Use of Force Policy Analysis/8 Can't Wait](#)

We do not present these recommendations as the only credible options for reform, rather as our contribution to the larger conversation of improving law enforcement in our state.

#### Use of Force:

- Standardize the use of force policies and training centered on the cornerstone principle of the sanctity of human life. De-escalation, proportionality, and the use of time, cover and distance will be emphasized, and the required training from I-940 should be accelerated. This required curriculum also includes training on implicit bias and the history of race and law enforcement.
- Require all law enforcement officers to intervene and report to their agency whenever another law enforcement officer uses excessive force or knowingly violates the rights of any person. Violation of this duty should be cause for discipline, up to and including termination.

#### Transparency and Accountability:

- Establish and expand wellness, resiliency and mental health support for law enforcement and corrections officers.
- Establish clear and meaningful support for law enforcement and corrections agencies to become accredited (undergo a Best Practice Audit) by a recognized state or national law enforcement or corrections accreditation entity.
- Reform the civil service system to provide greater access for more diverse candidates into the law enforcement profession and enable Sheriffs and Police Chiefs greater flexibility to hire and promote law enforcement officers who are best suited to carry out the agency's mission.
- Assist law enforcement and corrections agencies to establish intervention programs to identify troubling patterns and behaviors among law enforcement and corrections officers so intervention and support can be offered in a non-disciplinary manner.
- Establish a monitoring and review mechanism to ensure existing requirements for independent investigations regarding the use of deadly force are followed. Additionally, explore models for

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creating a completely independent statewide deadly force investigative team governed by a board that includes community members.

- Facilitate the implementation and use of body cameras.
- Reform binding interest arbitration to provide greater authority for Chiefs and Sheriffs to dismiss officers who are not helpful to the agency's mission or betray the public's trust.
- Change licensure rules to provide that a law enforcement officer can lose their Peace Officer Certification for excessive use of force, showing a pattern of failing to follow public policy, and other serious breaches of the public's trust.
- Require all Washington law enforcement agencies to submit data regarding the use of deadly force (creation of a statewide data base as proposed in SHB 2789 in 2020).

Defining the role of law enforcement:

- Partner with the Washington Commission on African American Affairs, Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, Commission on Hispanic Affairs, and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs to build relationships and trust between law enforcement and the community.
- Study and establish clear expectations for state investments and expansions of programs that support social services to address mental illness, substance use, and other adverse events that are shown to increase the likelihood of future criminal justice involvement.

As a profession and a society, we have an opportunity to implement reforms that will make progress on long standing issues. We must not squander it. WASPC is committed to working with all stakeholders, at every level of government, and from every facet of the communities we serve, to implement reforms that hold our profession accountable and build trust with the community. We will continue to listen, learn, and then act.

Sincerely,



Craig Meidl  
Chief of Police, Spokane  
President, WASPC



Steven D. Strachan  
WASPC Executive Director



James McMahan  
WASPC Policy Director