Council Perspectives

CCJ's independent Task Force on Policing was launched in late 2020 to identify the policies and practices most likely to reduce violent encounters between officers and the public and improve the fairness and effectiveness of American policing. Its members represent a diverse range of perspectives and experience and include law enforcement leaders, civil rights advocates, researchers, a former big-city mayor, and people who have lost loved ones to police violence.

The Task Force evaluated more than two dozen proposed policing reforms and developed 16 assessment briefs, ranging from de-escalation and procedural justice training to duty-to-intervene policies and internal police functions. After reviewing the best available research and considering their own professional and lived experience, Task Force members reached consensus on five top priorities for actionable change in policing.

Thaddeus Johnson

CCJ Senior Fellow; Assistant Professor, Criminal Justice and Criminology Andrew Young School of Policy Studies – Georgia State University

"May 25 marked the second anniversary of George Floyd's tragic death, and President Biden used the occasion to sign a historic executive order promoting effective, accountable, and community-centered policing. The order drew on input from law enforcement and reform advocates, and many of its provisions – from establishing a national database of police misconduct to strengthening de-escalation training and officer wellness initiatives – reflect the work and recommendations of the Council's Task Force on Policing.

As a Black man and former police officer, I am heartened by the President's action, while also aware of its limitations. The Administration cannot direct the nation's 18,000 state and local police forces to revise their policies and practices. But the President's mandates for federal law enforcement send a clear message and should encourage local agencies to take similar steps; many, in fact, are doing so already. On top of this, the Administration plans to incentivize changes by local departments through federal grant funding.

Despite the limits of his authority, the President has signaled his awareness of the absent

federal leadership in police reform, especially after Congress failed to pass the more comprehensive George Floyd Justice in Policing Act last year. Amid rising violence in the U.S., the action also conveys the Administration's understanding that improving policing and strengthening public trust in law enforcement are essential to the well-being of our communities.

Will one executive order resolve America's policing crisis? Of course not. We need our lawmakers to step up, put aside their political differences, and pass the measures necessary for long-term, sweeping change, including investments to address structural issues in underserved communities that contribute to over-policing. Executive action is only one critical step in the march toward lasting reform.

Still, while much more work lies ahead of us, Biden's action on a day of remembrance for George Floyd commits the federal government to the fight for change. Through leadership, guidance, incentives, resources, and funding, we can get there. We must."

Roy L. Austin

CCJ Task Force on Policing Member; Former DOJ prosecutor and White House official

"In the absence of action from Congress, this executive order is a crucial effort to put data and justice ahead of the tough-on-crime behavior and rhetoric that has devastated communities and has been counter-productive for public safety. Law enforcement can be given proper tools to do its job and be held accountable at the same time. It is far past time to do both."

Louis M. Dekmar

CCJ Task Force on Policing Member; Chief, LaGrange, Ga., Police Department; Former President, International Association of Chiefs of Police

"I appreciate President Biden's leadership in requiring from all federal law enforcement

agencies what has been the mandated standards for decades for many police agencies under federal DOJ supervision. For too long there's been one standard for local, county, and state law enforcement, and another for federal law enforcement."

Tashante McCoy

CCJ Task Force on Policing Member; Regional Manager and Founder, Crime Survivors for Safety & Justice/The OWL Movement

"At a time when our nation is experiencing repetitive cycles of grief, I'm pleased to see the administration has adopted our recommendations as part of this executive order. Our voices matter, and the more we use them even when we are in pain from the reality of our losses to the system, it creates the change we need to see."

Michael Nutter

CCJ Task Force on Policing Member; Former Mayor of Philadelphia

"I want to commend and thank President Biden for taking the necessary steps that should be codified into law by the Congress. Public safety will be enhanced by the provisions of the executive order. President Biden's actions should be the starting point of even more impactful reforms for the future of public safety."

Cynthia Lum, Ph.D

CCJ Task Force on Policing Member; Professor, Department of Criminology; Law and Society Director, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy George Mason University

"President Biden's executive order will help communities, law enforcement leaders, and municipalities facilitate the reforms that they seek. It will be equally crucial for these orders to be coupled with robust data collection, research, and evaluation to ensure that we

understand the impacts of these efforts on various outcomes as we move forward."