



June 22, 2020

Dear Member of Congress,

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike, to take action, not sides, and end America's gun violence epidemic. Our organization today carries the name of Jim and Sarah Brady. As you know, Jim was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. As victims of gun violence and life-long gun owners, Jim and Sarah dedicated the rest of their lives to passing federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans from coast to coast, red and blue, young and old, liberal and conservative, to combat the epidemic of gun violence.

Brady joins countless others across the country who are stating that police violence is gun violence, and as Americans take to the street, from coast to coast, Brady also joins the call for law enforcement reform, systemic change, and racial justice. **We strongly urge Members of Congress to support H.R. 7120, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020, a comprehensive bill that reforms policing and use of force, mandates transparency, and facilitates accountability.** Each of these approaches is necessary to improve the system of policing and to effectuate meaningful change. While this bill alone is not a solution for the persistent racial disparities that exist in our policing, criminal justice system, or underfunded social services, it is an important and significant step forward.

Compared to other countries, the U.S. suffers a disproportionate amount of police violence. As noted by renowned criminologist Franklin Zimring, "American police kill not only more often than other developed world police but at a vastly higher rate than any nation the United States would want to measure itself against."<sup>1</sup> In 2015-2016, there were an average of four arrest-related deaths in the U.S. every day,<sup>2</sup> and an interaction with an American police officer is 10 times more likely to end in death than police encounters in the U.K.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Franklin E. Zimring, *When Police Kill* (Harv. U. Press 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Duren Banks, RTI International, et al., Bureau of Just. Stat., *NCJ 250112, Arrest Related Deaths Program Redesign Study, 2015-2016: Preliminary Findings*. (2016), available at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ardprs1516pf.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Rob Picheta & Henrik Petterson, *American Police Shoot, Kill, and Imprison More People Than Other Developed Countries, Here's the Data*, CNN, June 8, 2020, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/08/us/us-police-floyd-protests-country-comparisons-intl/index.html>.

While this reality affects all Americans, across the board, people of color are more likely to be killed by police during their lifetime than white Americans.<sup>4</sup> Black men are 2.8 times more likely to be the victims of deadly police force than their white counterparts,<sup>5</sup> and unarmed Black men are more than four times as likely to be shot and killed by police than their White peers.<sup>6</sup>

While death at the hands of police is the ultimate degradation, people of color, and especially Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Latinx people face numerous aggressions in their interaction with law enforcement each and every day. Black and Latinx citizens are three times as likely to be searched by police when stopped,<sup>7</sup> and are twice as likely to have force used or threatened whenever they are approached by police.<sup>8</sup> Members of these communities are routinely given greater sentences than white offenders for the same crime. Black Americans are 5.9 times as likely to receive a prison sentence as white Americans.<sup>9</sup> They make up 48% offenders serving life sentences and virtual life sentences,<sup>10</sup> despite making up only 13.4% of the population.<sup>11</sup>

There is no shortage of infamous incidents of police violence in recent years targeting Americans from communities of color: George Floyd of Minnesota; Breonna Taylor of Kentucky; Dreasjon Reed of Indiana; Eric Garner of New York; Michael Brown of Missouri; Philando Castile of Minnesota - a small sample of a crisis that has plagued America since its inception.<sup>12</sup>

Although police violence is a result of complex racial and structural inequities, this violence is not inevitable or inexorable. The Justice in Policing Act is not the sole solution to preventing police violence, but the policies and processes it sets forth make for an important first step toward reducing police violence through reform, transparency, and accountability.

Police violence is gun violence and will require the same comprehensive and evidence-based approach to meaningfully remedy. Brady stands with everyone who has raised their voices and who count on their elected officials to take immediate and decisive action to **vote yes on H.R. 7120, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020**, to ensure that all Americans will be protected equally under the law.

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<sup>4</sup> See Frank Edwards et al., *Risk of Being Killed by Police Use of Force in the United States by Age, Race–Ethnicity, and Sex*, 116 PNAS 34 (2019).

<sup>5</sup> James Buchler, *Racial/Ethnic Disparities in the Use of Lethal Force by US Police, 2010-2014*, AM. J. PUB. HEALTH, Feb. 2017, available at <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303575>.

<sup>6</sup> Joe Fox et al., *What we've learned about police shootings 5 years after Ferguson*, WASH. POST, August 9, 2019, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/08/09/what-weve-learned-about-police-shootings-years-after-ferguson/?arc404=true&itid=lk\\_inline\\_manual\\_19](https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/08/09/what-weve-learned-about-police-shootings-years-after-ferguson/?arc404=true&itid=lk_inline_manual_19)

<sup>7</sup> *Hearing on Reports of Racism in the Justice Sys. of the U.S Before the Inter-American Comm'n on Human Rights*, 153rd Session (Oct 27, 2014) (Written Submission by the Am. Civ. Liberties Union) available at [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/141027\\_iachr\\_racial\\_disparities\\_aclu\\_submission\\_0.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/141027_iachr_racial_disparities_aclu_submission_0.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Davis, et al., BUREAU OF JUST. STAT., *NCJ 251145, Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2015*. (October 2018), available at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpp15.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Zhen Zeng, BUREAU OF JUST. STAT., *NCJ 251210, Jail Inmates in 2016*, 3 tbl. 2 (Feb. 2018), available at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ji16.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> (virtual life sentence meaning a sentence of 50+ years) Ashley Nellis, *Still Life: America's Increasing Use of Life and Long-Term Sentences*, THE SENT'G PROJECT, May 3, 2017, at 5.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Community Surveys: 2019*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US#qf-headnote-a>.

<sup>12</sup> Chelsea Hansen, *Slave Patrols: An Early Form of American Policing*, NAT'L L. ENFORCEMENT MUSEUM BLOG, Jul. 10, 2019 available at <https://lawenforcementmuseum.org/2019/07/10/slave-patrols-an-early-form-of-american-policing/>

We also strongly believe, after representing victims of gun violence who are law enforcement officers in the courts for over 30 years, that addressing these issues through the kinds of approaches championed in H.R. 7120 can make the jobs of law enforcement officers less dangerous and more consistent with the role of protecting and preserving safety in communities that can provide a true public benefit.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kris Brown', written over a horizontal line.

Kris Brown  
President, Brady