



March 3, 2021

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.

The senseless and brutal murders of Breonna Taylor on March 13, 2020, and George Floyd on May 25, 2020, brought millions of Americans of all backgrounds and races to the streets demanding justice and reigniting the national debate on policing, public safety, and racial justice.<sup>1</sup> While communities of color, and particularly Black Americans, have long decried racial disparities in policing and the murder of unarmed Black men and women by police officers, the recent killings of Black Americans have awoken the consciousness of the broad spectrum of Americans in ways that past injustices have not.<sup>2</sup> Brady renews its calls for systemic change and racial justice.

**We strongly urge Members of Congress to support H.R. 1280, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021, a comprehensive bill that reforms policing, mandates transparency, and facilitates accountability.** Each of these approaches, alongside reallocation and reassessment of resources and authority from police to social services and organization, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> See Evan Hill, et al., *8 Minutes and 46 Seconds: How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody*, N.Y. TIMES, May 31, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Kendall Karson, *74% of Americans view George Floyd's death as an underlying racial injustice problem: POLL*, ABC NEWS, June 5, 2020, available at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/74-americans-view-george-floyds-death-underlying-racial/story?id=71074422>.

The mere presence of a firearm heightens tensions and exacerbates confrontations. This is true in any context, but it is particularly relevant within the context of police interactions, in which there is already an inherently unequal power dynamic. Police violence is the unlawful, unnecessary, or disproportionate use of force by police. And because police violence, in all of its forms, is facilitated by the direct use, threat, or perceived threat of firearms, not only to the victims but also bystanders with intent to intervene, ***police violence is gun violence.***

The rate of police violence in America far exceeds that in similarly industrialized countries. Interactions with an American police officer are 10 times more likely to end in death than police encounters in the U.K.<sup>3</sup> While this reality affects all people living in America, people of color, especially Black and Latinx people, are much more likely to be killed by police during their lifetime than white people.<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> 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; Elijah McCain of Colorado; 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.

These numbers do not account for the daily injuries and instances of harassment, abuse, and threatening behavior, otherwise known as “over-policing” suffered by Black and Latinx communities. Black and Latinx citizens are three times as likely to be searched by police when stopped,<sup>6</sup> and are twice as likely to have force used or threatened whenever they're approached by police.<sup>7</sup> A key example of this is in policies like “stop and frisk” that are rooted in discriminatory policing. Such strategies unfairly target communities of color and make even well-intentioned attempts at policing problematic.<sup>8</sup> Overall quality of life is significantly impacted and diminished by over-policing in Black and Latinx neighborhoods. High rates of law enforcement presence in these communities does not translate into effective or equitable policing or public safety, rather it creates mistrust and fear between Black and Latinx communities and law

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<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>.

<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> *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>7</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>8</sup> See *Contacts Between Police and the Public*, 2015. (October 2018); *Stop-and-Frisk in the de Blasio Era*, N.Y. CIV. LIBERTIES UNION, March 2019, available at <https://www.nyclu.org/en/Stop-and-Frisk-data>; Samuel Sinyangwe, *Evaluating Policing in San Diego*, CAMPAIGN ZERO, <https://policescorecard.org/assets/san-diego/police-scorecard-san-diego-report.pdf?ac=54230acb52f1cd288f56e6b599d16926d8d2c6b6>; Summer Ballentine, *Black Missouri drivers 91% more likely to be stopped state attorney general finds*, PUB. BROADCAST SERV. (June 10, 2019), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/black-missouri-drivers-91-more-likely-to-be-stopped-state-attorney-general-find>.

enforcement.<sup>9</sup> The daily aggressions and systemic oppression communities of color have faced since the inception of our country are not solely a product of policing, but they are perpetuated by law enforcement practices.<sup>10</sup>

Although police violence is a result of complex racial and structural inequities, this violence is not inexorable. While the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is not the sole solution to preventing police violence, the policies and processes it sets forth make for an important first step toward reducing police violence through reform, transparency, and accountability. Brady strongly holds, after 30 years of representing law enforcement officers who were themselves victims of gun violence, that addressing these issues through the kinds of approaches championed in H.R. 1280 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.

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. 1280, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021**, to ensure that all Americans will be protected equally under the law.

Most Sincerely,



Kris Brown  
President, Brady

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<sup>9</sup> Noting that over-policing does not have a long term effect, after periods of intensive police presence, the crime rates in the studied neighborhoods returned to pre-high presence levels, as did fear of crime. David Weisburd & Cody Telep, *Hot Spots Policing: What We Know and What We Need to Know*, J. CONTEMP. CRIM. JUST., 200, 210-211 (2014), available at <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxygw.wrlc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/104398621452508>; See Sarah Childress, *The Problem with "Broken Windows" Policing*, PUB. BROADCAST SERV., June 28, 2016, available at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-problem-with-broken-windows-policing/>.

<sup>10</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/>.