

ILHAN OMAR
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
5TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

1730 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4755

404 3RD AVENUE NORTH – SUITE 203
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401
(612) 333-1272

WWW.OMAR.HOUSE.GOV



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2305

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR
SUBCOMMITTEES ON
HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT
WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS
HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEES ON
AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, AND GLOBAL HUMAN
RIGHTS
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS, AND GLOBAL CORPORATE
SOCIAL IMPACT

May 25, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland:

Congratulations on your appointment and confirmation as Attorney General. It is a pleasure to be able to write to you in this capacity.

On April 21, 2021 the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced you will conduct an investigation into the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and their patterns and practices. I write to ask you to consider opening additional investigations of patterns and practices to include the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), Minnesota State Patrol (SP), Hennepin County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), the Brooklyn Center Police Department (BCPD), the Richfield Police Department (RPD), the Edina Police Department (EPD) and the St. Anthony Police Department (SAPD).

The May 2020 murder of George Floyd under the knee of MPD officer Derek Chauvin showed millions of people around the world how MPD policed – and continues to police – Black, Indigenous, and people of color in our community. However, recent years of similar law enforcement actions in Minnesota show that the murder of Mr. Floyd is not unique – it is a pattern among many Minnesota law enforcement agencies. When Philando Castile was killed in 2017¹ by SAPD officer Jeronimo Yanez at a routine traffic stop, media outlets reported his long history of being pulled over repeatedly over a decade for minor – if any – violations.² Since the SAPD began publishing demographic data on traffic stops, the “share of Black people its officers pulled over has increased each year.”³ In Richfield, officers from the EPD and RPD killed Brian Quinones in September 2019, after an investigation the officers involved faced no legal consequences.⁴ The most recent police killing in Minnesota of Daunte Wright by BCPD officer

¹ German Lopez, . "Philando Castile Minnesota Police Shooting: Officer Cleared of Manslaughter Charge." (Vox Media, 2017)

² Eyder Peralta and Cheryl Corley “The Driving Life And Death Of Philando Castile.” (NPR, 2016)

³ Solomon Gustavo. "Four Years After Philando Castile, St. Anthony Police Continue to Pull Over Black Motorists at Disproportionate Rates." (MinnPost, 2020)

⁴ Brandt Williams. "Richfield, Edina Officers not Charged in Shooting Death of Brian

Kim Potter – a 26-year veteran of the force⁵ – illustrates that this is not an issue of training or fear. It is a pattern that repeats among many law enforcement agencies throughout the Twin Cities metro. Across the state, Black Minnesotans are disproportionately arrested for low-level crimes⁶ and are disproportionately likely to experience violence at the hands of police.⁷

The law enforcement response to the mass movement that has arisen in opposition to police killings and violent over-policing of BIPOC communities has also been met with extreme and unnecessary force. In preparation for the trial of Derek Chauvin, the State of Minnesota created a joint-command response called Operation Safety Net (OSN).⁸ Rather than keep residents safe, community members and elected officials highlighted that this “response” obscured the chain of command and resulted in excessive violence to community members without accountability.⁹ Law enforcement used “less-lethal” munitions and chemical weapons indiscriminately, even targeting journalists¹⁰ before a federal judge issued a Temporary Restraining Order against law enforcement entities.¹¹ The entities present during these protests – HCSO, SP, MPD, BCPD, and other agencies – should not be allowed to let a “partnership” such as OSN obscure their responsibility to uphold civil and human rights. Local medical professionals have researched the long-term medical consequences of this egregious militarized violence, finding that dozens of people are facing permanently disabling injuries following police escalation at protests over the last year.¹² Indeed, as soon as OSN partners stopped approaching protestors with violence, there was no longer violence at the protests.¹³

The MPD practices that led to Mr. Floyd’s death are not unique among Minnesota law enforcement. These issues are visible both in proactive law enforcement settings like traffic stops and arrests, but also in the law enforcement response to protests shining a light on these injustices. Minnesota has some of the nation’s worst and most persistent racial disparities¹⁴, and the DOJ’s investigation of systemic issues in Minnesota law enforcement would be an important

Quinones." (Minnesota Public Radio, 2020)

⁵Joshua Rashaad McFadden. "What to Know About the Death of Daunte Wright. (New York City: The New York Times Company, 2021)

⁶Lynette Kalsnes "Black People Five Times More Likely to Get Arrested for Marijuana in Minnesota." (ACLU of Minnesota, 2020)

⁷Ricardo Lopez "Minnesota's Decades-Long Failure to Confront Police Abuse."(New York City: Condé Nast, 2020)

⁸"Operation Safety Net - About" accessed at <https://safetynet.mn.gov/Pages/about.asp> (MN Gov, 2021)

⁹Kyle Brown and Tom Hauser "Operation Safety Net Ramps Up as Local Officials, Organizations Call for its Curtailment." (KSTP-TV, 2021)

¹⁰Adrianna Rodriguez "Police in Minnesota Round Up Journalists Covering Protest Force Them on the Ground and Take Pictures of Their Faces." (USA Today, 2021)

¹¹Todd Richmond "Journalists Allege Police Harassment at Minnesota Protests" (Associated Press 2021)

¹²Kaske and Cramer "Injuries from Less-Lethal Weapons during the George Floyd Protests in Minneapolis" (Massachusetts Medical Society, 2021)

¹³MPR News Staff "Seventh Night of Protests in Brooklyn Center Ends Without Confrontation." (Minnesota Public Radio, 2021)

¹⁴Eyder Peralta and Cheryl Corley "The Driving Life And Death Of Philando Castile." (NPR, 15 July 2016)

step toward addressing our state's racial inequities. It is for these reasons that we request the DOJ consider additional investigations of other law enforcement entities that also contribute to this environment of racial violence and injustice.

Thank you for prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Addition signees:



Senator Chris Eaton – District 40



Senator Omar Fateh – District 62



Senator Mary Kunesh – District 41



Senator Patricia Torres Ray – District 63



Representative Esther Agbaje – District 59B



Representative Sandra Feist – District 41B



Representative Aisha Gomez – District 62B



Representative Sydney Jordan – District 60A



Representative Fue Lee – District 59A



Commissioner Angela Conley – District 4



Commissioner Irene Fernando – District 2



Commissioner Marion Greene – District 3



Council Member Jeremiah Ellison – Ward 5

Steve Fletcher

Council Member Steve Fletcher – Ward 3



Council Member Cam Gordon – Ward 2



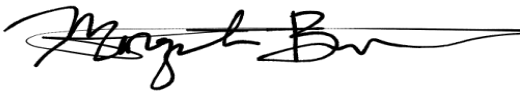
Council Member Andrea Jenkins – Ward 8



Council Member Andrew Johnson – Ward 12



Council Member Jeremy Schroder – Ward 11



Brooklyn Center Council Member Marquita Butler