



OFFICE OF THE HENNEPIN COUNTY ATTORNEY

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN COUNTY ATTORNEY

April 30, 2021

Dear Hennepin County Legislative Delegation:

As the largest public law office in the State handling over 10,000 criminal charges a year from approximately 150 different police jurisdictions, we are in the position to constantly review police action. We have served as the highly visible prosecutors in police-involved use of force cases in Hennepin County—with a commitment to transparency in place of the curtain required by grand jury review. While we honor the role of police agencies and their governing bodies, we also recognize that State legislation and police practices seem to resist the sweeping reform now called for by the public. With this in mind, we seek to join the legislative debate with an eye to those initiatives now proposed that, taken together, can make the difference sought by the public.

Let me first note that the Minnesota business community has often been heard on policing matters and has made a difference in turning around unacceptable criminal trends in neighborhoods like Phillips and downtown in Minneapolis. There are other good ideas about criminal law and policing reform. At this time at end of session, I urge legislators to focus on these key changes. Two respected business organizations, the Minnesota Business Partnership and the Minneapolis Downtown Council, have taken on the legislative challenge of police reform and the private sector partnership that extends the proper exercise of police authority. We support their platforms for police reform and public safety within this eight-point plan for policing reform in Hennepin County.

1. **Fully fund Attorney General's Office Criminal Division** – Allow the Office of the Attorney General to improve its criminal division for purposes of assisting less populous counties with more serious crimes and assist all counties in officer-involved use of deadly force cases if necessary.
2. **No-knock warrants** – Limit the use of no-knock warrants to the most serious crimes; they should never be used for drug crimes.
3. **Traffic stops** – Decriminalize minor, non-safety-related traffic regulations or prohibit law enforcement from initiating traffic stops for these infractions.
4. **Engage with the Department of Justice Civil Rights Investigation** – Fully disclose the patterns and practices of the Minneapolis Police Department and adopt reforms resulting from the investigation.
5. **Body cameras** – Fully fund and require the use of body-worn cameras.
6. **Post Board de-licensing for use of force policy violations or arbitration reform** – The POST Board should take appropriate measures to discipline officers who fail to fulfill their basic duties, including revoking the license of officers who conduct themselves in a willful or reckless manner. If the POST Board does not take action against those officers, the arbitration process should be immediately reformed.
7. **Modernize training** – Require additional training on racial profiling, implicit bias, and the duty to intervene when another officer uses excessive force, and explore non-disciplinary use of body camera video and simulators scenarios to improve officer performance through proactive coaching/mentoring and training in de-escalation tactics

- 8. Duty to report** – Require peace officers who observe another peace officer use unreasonable force to report such action to his or her chief law enforcement officer.

We support these initiatives as the package that we think is the best combination of tools on the table for police reform. Will it perfect the use of force in policing? No. Will it substantially improve careful use of force in policing? Without a doubt. We recommend these points to the Hennepin County legislative delegation, to the County Sheriff and our other partners in law enforcement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O. Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN
Hennepin County Attorney