



May 18, 2021

The Honorable Nancy P. Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin O. McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders,

Government Accountability Project and the undersigned 170 organizations write to seek your leadership in protecting individuals with best practice anti-retaliation rights for reporting law enforcement misconduct in any justice reform legislation regarding policing. Legislation without proper accountability makes laws unenforceable, which can intensify community backlash and become magnets for cynicism and resentment. This need for accountability and enforceability is why Congress included whistleblower protection in over 60 federal remedial laws, including 16 times unanimously since the start of the millennium. Now the same standards outlined by Congress previously must be applied in all policing bills for those reforms to be credible.

The truth is changing the course of history. Unfortunately, accountability in law enforcement remains a major challenge. Accountability-free abuses of power have become a way of life, and for current reform proposals to work as intended, they must have effective measures protecting those who bear witness in order to enforce the law against law enforcement officers who break it. Video footage has led to a national reckoning, but sometimes it takes more than a smartphone to protect and defend victims of police brutality. In many cases, accountability requires testimony from those willing to bear witness, which are often fellow officers and law enforcement personnel.

However, the “blue wall of silence,” compounded by the lack of anti-retaliation protection for law enforcement, forces law enforcement officers to risk their careers, safety, or even their lives when they choose to blow the whistle. That is why we are asking Congress to include whistleblower rights in police reform bills.

How can whistleblowers make a difference enforcing police reforms? Their testimony could turn citizen rights into reality for major safeguards such as:

- the ban on chokeholds;
- controls on other deadly force;
- expanded liability;
- pattern and practice investigations;
- oversight of mandatory body cameras;
- restrictions on no knock warrants;
- controls on transfer of military equipment to state and local police;
- open and transparent forensic crime laboratory operations;
- accurate and complete information for a national registry; and
- an oversight record based on the whole truth for all oversight and enforcement.

Whistleblowing for law enforcement is “committing the truth,” because they are treated as if they had committed a crime. But the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is the foundation for legitimate reform. There can be no higher priority than protecting those who provide it.

Sincerely,

Government Accountability Project
 350.org
 Academics Stand Against Poverty
 ACORN8
 Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
 Advocating Opportunity
 Affiliation of Christian Engineers
 Agape Healing Hearts
 Alaska Community Action on Toxics
 Alianza Americas
 Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
 Alliance for Human Research Protection
 Alliance for Justice
 American Association for Justice
 American Civil Liberties Union
 American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
 Asian Law Alliance
 Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
 Association of Health Care Journalists
 Blacks in law Enforcement of America
 Blue Wave Postcard Movement
 California Communities Against Toxics
 CantWait
 Casa Ruby
 Center for Democracy & Technology
 Center for International Policy
 Center for Justice & Democracy
 Center for Media and Democracy
 Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.

CEO Pipe Organs/Golden Ponds Farm
Citizens Awareness Network
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Clean Elections Texas
Cleveland Park Congregational UCC
Common Cause
Connecticut Civil Rights Council
Constitutional Alliance
Consumer Action
Corruption kills
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
CovertAction Magazine
Cumberland Countians For Peace & Justice
Daily Kos
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
DemCast USA
Democracy 21
Dialysis Advocates & Associates
Digital Democracy Project
Dignity and Power Now
Disaster Accountability Project
ECI Communications
Equal Rights Advocates
Essential Information
Farmworker Association of Florida
Fight for the Future
Food & Water Action
FracTracker Alliance
Freedom Network USA
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Glynn Environmental Coalition
Government Information Watch
Greenpeace US
Haitian Bridge Alliance
HBCU Collective
Hip Hop Caucus
HIPS
Hispanic Federation
Humanist Society of New Mexico
Indiana Coalition for Open Government
Innocence Project
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio
International Association of Whistleblowers (IAW)
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement

Jobs with Justice of East Tennessee
Kentucky Resources Council, Inc.
Lamplighter Project
Latin American Youth Center
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Liberty Shared
Living United For Change In Arizona
Main Street Project
Mainers for Accountable Leadership
Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights
Muslim American Law Enforcement Association
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Education Association
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Immigration Project (NIP-NLG)
National Judicial Conduct and Disability Law Project, Inc.
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National Organization for Women
National Security Counselors
National Whistleblower Center
National Whistleblower Legal Defense & Education Fund
National Workrights Institute
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility
New American Leaders Action Fund
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
New Moral Majority
NOMOS Consulting
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
Open The Government
Our Bodies Ourselves
Pax Advisory
Pax Christi USA
Peace and Freedom Party, California
People For the American Way
People's Parity Project
Pinos Y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)
Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa
Poligon Education Fund
Press Freedom Defense Fund of First Look Institute
PRESS4WORD
Privacy Times

Professional Managers Association
Project Censored/Media Freedom Foundation
Project On Government Oversight
Protect All Children's Environment
Public Citizen
Public Justice
Public Justice Center
R Street Institute
RAICES
Restore The Fourth
Right to life A4O
RootsAction.org
Rural Coalition
S.T.O.P. - Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition
Shadow World Investigations
Society of Professional Journalists
Sojourners
Stand Up Republic
Strategies for Justice
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders (SMYAL)
Tahirih Justice Center
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
Texas Civil Rights Project
The Judicial Accountability Movement
The Multiracial Activist
The Oakland Institute
The Rutherford Institute
The Signals Network
The Workers Circle
Transparency International - U.S. Office
Truckers Justice Center
Tully Center for Free Speech
Union of Concerned Scientists
UNISHKA Research Service, Inc
UNITED SIKHS
Visual Teaching Technologies
Voices for Progress
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
Washington Office on Latin America
Whistleblower Network News
Whistleblowers of America
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Women's Action for New Directions
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom US

Woodhull Freedom Foundation
Workplace Fairness
X-Lab

Cc:

The Honorable Jerry Nadler
Chair, U.S. House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chair, U.S. House Oversight and Reform Committee

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member, U.S. House Oversight and Reform Committee

The Honorable Richard Durbin,
Chair, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chair, U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

The Congressional Black Caucus

The House and Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucuses