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June 16, 2020

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the NEA across the nation who are dedicated to teaching, supporting, and nurturing all students regardless of their race or ethnicity, we are submitting these comments for consideration during tomorrow's markup of the Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (H.R. 7120), and we urge you to vote YES on this crucial bill. Votes associated with this issue may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 116th Congress.

Educators believe that preparing students for the responsibilities of citizenship means teaching them to appreciate a fundamental principle of our democracy: All of us are equal and deserving of protections under our nation's system of laws. However, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and, only days ago, Rayshard Brooks by police officers who behave as if they are above the laws they have sworn to uphold make a mockery of that principle and highlight the historic issue of systemic racism. Our students see the reality before their eyes, and even worse, many of them—particularly in black and brown communities—are subjected to police brutality themselves or have family members or friends who have been victimized.

Going to school or returning home from an after-school job or visiting friends or simply going to a cookout or concert—or a playground—should not put students' lives at risk. But sadly, in communities of color, police officers who have taken an oath to serve and protect often view their fellow citizens as the enemy. In fact, a 2019 study published in a National Academy of Sciences journal found that about 1 in every 1,000 black men can expect to be killed by police.

NEA members believe that without federal reform, police brutality will continue with impunity, especially as the spotlight shifts and the news cycle changes. The Justice in Policing Act takes steps to end police brutality and restore the faith that we want—and need—to place in law enforcement agencies, including:

- Prohibiting law enforcement agencies from profiling based on race, religion, or other characteristics, and mandating training on discriminatory profiling for all law enforcement;
- Banning chokeholds and other maneuvers that apply pressure that slows or stops the flow of blood to the brain;
- Banning no-knock warrants and limiting the transfer of military-grade equipment to state and local law enforcement;
- Mandating the use of dashboard and body cameras for federal law enforcement, and requiring state and local law enforcement to use federal funds to purchase police body cameras;

- Establishing a national registry to prevent officers who are fired or leave an agency because of issues regarding their conduct from moving to another jurisdiction without any accountability; and
- Reforming qualified immunity so that individuals can recover damages when police officers violate their constitutional rights.

NEA members are active in the fight for social and racial justice because it is directly linked to ensuring that all students, in every community, have access to the opportunities they deserve to learn and thrive in our nation. We cannot afford to waste the momentum of this difficult time, and we cannot risk the possibility that another black family will be left to mourn a loved one's senseless death at the hands of those we are supposed to trust. We urge you to vote YES on the Justice in Policing Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association