

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN AND
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Responsible Policing and Use of Force Reform

On May 25, George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer during an arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill. While Floyd was handcuffed and pinned to the ground, Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes as Floyd pleaded and repeatedly told Chauvin and three onlooking officers that he could not breathe before losing consciousness. He was pronounced dead one hour later.

Video of George Floyd’s death has sparked protests nationwide over police use of force and the growing list of unarmed black men and women who have been killed by law enforcement in this country. For decades, systemic racism, implicit bias, and excessive use of force have resulted in the disproportionate killing of black men and women by police. Even though black Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population, they account for 26% of all people who were shot and killed by police from 2015 to 2019. While law enforcement agencies play an important role in protecting public safety, it is imperative that reforms be made to protect the lives of the civilians that they encounter.

Research has shown that concrete changes made to department policy and

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training can result in decreased uses of force by law enforcement officers. The organization “Campaign Zero” has identified eight reforms to use of force policies that have been shown to reduce the number of officer-involved killings. These policy reforms include:

1. Requiring officers to intervene to stop another officer from using excessive force
2. Restricting, or prohibiting, the use of chokeholds, strangleholds, and carotid restraints
3. Requiring officers to de-escalate situations, when possible, before using force
4. Using a Force Continuum or Matrix that defines and limits the types of force that can be used to respond to specific types of resistance
5. Requiring officers to give a verbal warning before using deadly force
6. Prohibiting officers from shooting at people in moving vehicles unless the person poses a deadly threat by means other than the vehicle
7. Requiring officers to exhaust all other reasonable alternatives before resorting to using deadly force
8. Requiring comprehensive reporting that includes both uses of force and threats of force

Each of these eight reforms was associated with a 15% reduction in police killings for the average police department, and departments that implemented more than four of the reforms saw the largest reduction in killings (Campaign Zero, “Police Use of Force Policy Analysis”, 2016). Importantly, departments with more restrictive use of force policies also experienced lower rates of assaults on officers and officers killed in the line of duty (Campaign Zero, “Police Use of Force Policy Analysis”, 2016).

While there are law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles County that have made significant steps toward reform, no local law enforcement department has adopted all

eight of these policies. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), for example, does not include chokeholds in their training practices. However, chokeholds, stranguleholds, carotid restraints, and the knee-on-neck hold that killed George Floyd are not explicitly prohibited in department policy. Additionally, requiring the reporting of threats of use of force is one of the reforms associated with the highest reduction in police killings, but neither the LASD or Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) require this type of comprehensive reporting. In addition to the reforms put forward by Campaign Zero, the Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) of the Sheriff's Department created an Ad Hoc Committee that has, over the past several months, been reviewing and analyzing the Sheriff's use of force policies in order to make recommendations on how to strengthen these policies. The COC is set to issue these recommendations in the coming weeks.

Across the nation, people are rising up to say that they have had enough of the senseless killing of unarmed black men and women at the hands of the police. There are concrete changes that can be implemented right now to department use of force policies that have been proven to result in decreased use of force incidents and fewer officer-involved killings. It is time for law enforcement departments across Los Angeles County to evaluate their own use of force policies and update them to make meaningful progress in preventing the use of unnecessary lethal force by their officers.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Urge the Sheriff's Department and the forty-six police departments within Los Angeles County to review their use of force policies and adapt them to be consistent with the eight reforms outlined by Campaign Zero and listed in the preamble of this motion, and follow up by sending a five-signature letter to each entity.

2. Direct the Civilian Oversight Commission of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) to report back to the Board in less than 30 days with their recommendations on strengthening LASD's use of force policies and practices.

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