

For Immediate Release

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Civil Rights, Racial Justice, and Gun Violence Prevention Organizations Urge Congress to Decouple Police Funding Bills from Assault Weapons Ban and Community Safety Investment Bills

As organizations that have spent years fighting for civil rights, racial justice and the genuine safety that *all* of our communities deserve, we stand together to oppose a vote in the House of Representatives on a combined rule that would join together two issues that should not be dependent on one another—preventative measures, including a ban on assault weapons and evidence-based community safety solutions, and bills that would expand policing resources (i.e., the Invest to Protect Act and the COPS on the Beat Program Reauthorization and Parity Act).

In our respective fields, we have witnessed firsthand the incalculable toll of violence and harm—not only from gun violence, but also from policing systems that operate with impunity. From these experiences, we know exactly how urgent change is needed. And from these experiences, we *also* know that solutions are possible. **But the vote on the combined rule that Congress is taking today, joining together police funding and an assault weapons ban, is not moving us toward this goal.** By pairing these issues together, Congress is failing to understand that what communities plagued by gun violence need is *not* more resources toward law enforcement, but meaningful, evidence-based action on gun safety and community-based gun violence intervention. Overwhelming evidence indicates that policing and incarceration are ineffective tools for increasing community safety. Meanwhile, we have a [wealth of evidence](#) uplifting the role of violence interruption, healthcare access, affordable housing, non-carceral crisis response, youth mentorship, streetlights, community spaces, and other community-based solutions in dramatically reducing violence and harm. Moreover, lawmakers are using a rushed process that has given no Member of Congress adequate time to review and fully evaluate the impacts of H.R.6375, COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act, and H.R. 6448, Invest to Protect Act being included.

We agree that Congress should pass a legislative package that makes bold, historic investments in bolstering community safety and preventing violence and harm. We believe, though, that this

package should be grounded in evidence, reasoned deliberation and a fair process that allows full consideration of each issue being addressed. **The vote being considered today is not this process.** For this reason, we respectfully request that Congress pull the police expansion bills from this legislative package, allowing the vote on an assault weapons ban, non-carceral crisis response and evidence-based violence prevention to proceed.

March For Our Lives

“Police violence is gun violence,” said Zeenat Yahya, Director of Policy at March For Our Lives. “We demand that congressional leaders pass urgent funding for community violence intervention immediately, but it's unconscionable to do that by forcing that funding to be connected to a wave of new funds for unaccountable police departments. We cannot force communities of color to bear the brunt of even more gun violence through policing. Black and Brown communities are not bargaining chips. Coupling these bills for the sake of a campaign soundbite is cynical and wrong.”

Color Of Change

“Which do you want more? Less school shootings or less crime in your neighborhood? The comparison is ridiculous, we need both,” said Rashad Robinson, president of Color Of Change, the largest online racial justice organization in the country. “Civil rights and gun violence prevention advocates are working together to build a holistically safe society, we won't let congress trade safety in our schools with safety in our communities.”

Civil Rights Corps

“Congress can and must pass legislation like the People's Response Act that makes bold investments in comprehensive policies that will truly keep our communities safe by addressing the actual root causes of harm, not doubling down on wasteful and unaccountable bureaucracy” said Alec Karakatsanis, Founder and Executive Director of Civil Rights Corps. “This rushed legislative package, which combines two issues that do not belong together, undercuts this essential goal. The massive expansion of the surveillance and punishment bureaucracy is irresponsible, contrary to all available scientific evidence about what keeps us safe, and alarming at a time of increased criminalization of reproductive health. Congress must decouple this legislation.”

MomsRising

“Families want safe communities and safe schools. We must get this right. It cannot be rushed. This package will not get us the change we need. It gives us more of the same. This lack of transparency in pushing for police expansion without any accountability measures is not what communities have been asking for,” said Beatriz Beckford, National Director at MomsRising.

“Across the country, communities are looking at evidence-based approaches to reduce and prevent violence and harm. This legislation undermines and ignores sound data and puts essential resources into what data show as inefficient in increasing community safety. Instead we urge you to support thoughtful evidence-based policy efforts including the People’s Response Act and the Counseling Not Criminalization Act.”

American Civil Liberties Union

“Preservation of civil liberties demands that Congress should not rush this process,” said Cynthia W. Roseberry, Deputy Director of policy for the Justice Division of the American Civil Liberties Union. “The importance of considering potential harm is essential to ensure fairness, accountability, and safety for all communities.”

LIVE FREE

“Any increase in police spending that does not include accountability and reform requirements is a betrayal to black communities suffering from intersecting public safety crises,” said Pastor Michael McBride, Executive Director of LIVE FREE. “Shame on democrats who seem to be willing to trade one set of voters for another by playing politics with public safety.”

PUSH Buffalo

“PUSH wholeheartedly supports investing deeply in disinvested and extracted from BIPOC and working class communities through community based public health, supportive and affordable housing, local hiring and training, public education and public transportation to address current and historic policies at the root,” said PUSH Buffalo’s Executive Director, Rahwa Ghirmatzion.

United Church of Christ

“I urge prudence in this effort. This is a repeat of 1994 and will be disastrous in communities already struggling to breathe,” said Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister at the United Church of Christ

Movement for Black Lives

“Black and brown communities, who have been on the frontlines of pushing meaningful criminal legal system reform, deserve for their demands for community investment legislation to be met with the care, integrity and thorough review that it deserves,” said Gina Clayton-Johnson, Policy Table Lead, Movement for Black Lives. “Proposed investments in a holistic approach to community safety that is evidence-based and non punitive, is being undermined by its coupling

with a rushed legislative package that calls for more money to police, a reactionary policy response that has never yielded safety for our communities.”

“We urge Congress to remove the police expansion bills from this legislative package, and embrace legislation that takes seriously the work required to end the harm and begin the healing from carceral systems, including the People’s Response Act, the Counselors not Criminalization Act, the Drug Policy Reform Act, and the Fix Clemency Act.”

Justice Strategies

“Vote no on new police funding,” said Judy Greene, Executive Director of Justice Strategies

Faith For Black Lives

“This draconian piece of legislation to increase funding for policing fans the flame of anti-blackness and white supremacy as fascism permeates through society in America,” said Rev. Stephen A. Green, Chair of Faith for Black Lives, “As faith leaders, we condemn legislators who vote to enact this harmful legislation that will inherently lead to an increase in violence towards the most vulnerable, Black, Brown and Poor People.”

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

“Bend the Arc: Jewish action and thousands of progressive Jews across the county strongly oppose rushing through legislation that would provide additional funding to police—this is not what our communities need,” said Bend the Arc’s Executive Director, Jason Kimelman-Block We instead urge the House to pass legislation that would truly improve our communities’ safety like the People’s Response Act and The Mental Health Justice Act.”

Not Another Child Inc.

“Protect the peace of our communities!” said Oresa Napper-Williams, Founder and Executive Director of Not Another Child Inc.

Until Freedom

“More police won’t equal Public Safety—and every time Congress plays politics with police, Black and Brown and poor communities lose,” said Tamika D. Mallory, Co-Founder of Until Freedom. “The idea that we must combine an assault weapons ban with policing bills further demonstrates why it’s vital that frontline organizations who deal with community violence lead efforts to curb violence. We have to keep reminding folks that police rarely stop crime, in most if

not all areas where police are increased, crime rises, and often - too often - police presence creates violence. We need accountability in policing. We need transparency in policing. We need demilitarization in policing. And what we need more of, is a true investment in violence interrupters, mental health services and healthy communities for our public safety. We need something different.”

Equal Justice USA

“There’s no question that Congress must invest in life-saving, community-driven violence intervention and prevention strategies,” said Will Simpson, Director of Violence Reduction Initiatives at Equal Justice USA. “This funding is integral to building safety and creating healing for Black and Brown communities. But we cannot hold those community-based support systems hostage for the sake of continued failed investments into policing that create no accountability for communities they are supposed to serve.”

Woke Vote

“The answer to peace is not the presence of more police,” said DeJuana Thompson, founder of Woke Vote. “The hurried and hushed way this is being processed is further evidence we have to have a more transparent and righteous leadership.”

Signed By:

March For Our Lives

Color Of Change

Civil Rights Corps

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

Legal Defense Fund (LDF)

Indivisible

MomsRising

LIVE FREE

PUSH Buffalo

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

United Church of Christ

Until Freedom

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Working Families Party

Movement for Black Lives

Justice Strategies

Justice Democrats

Equal Justice USA

Faith for Black Lives

Not Another Child Inc

People's Action

Until Freedom

Life Camp, Inc

Woke Vote

Terence Crutcher Foundation

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[March For Our Lives](#) is a national youth-led movement to end gun violence in America. Its mission is to harness the power of young people across the country to fight for sensible gun violence prevention policies that save lives. Since March 2018, students from all across the United States have called for common-sense reforms that will save the lives of more than 3,000 young people each year. Concurrently, March For Our Lives has established nearly 300 youth-led chapters across the country, continuously growing this chapter network to give young people a local forum to exercise their activism.

[Color Of Change](#) is the nation's largest online racial justice organization. We help people respond effectively to injustice in the world around us. As a national online force driven by 7 million members, we

move decision-makers in corporations and government to create a more human and less hostile world for Black people in America.

[Civil Rights Corps](#) is one of the nation's leading impact litigation and policy organizations, working to dismantle criminal-legal and racial injustice, and build up alternative structures to advance genuine community safety. We fight on the local, state and federal levels to advance holistic, root-cause focused solutions to maintaining safe and thriving communities.

[American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#) is one of the nation's preeminent organization leading the fight for civil liberties and constitutional rights. For over a century, they've fought to protect freedoms for all Americans.

[Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.

[Indivisible](#) is a nationwide movement of thousands of volunteer-led local groups that engage in progressive advocacy and electoral work at the local, state, and national levels.

[MomsRising](#) is a grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all moms, women, and families in the United States.

[LIVE FREE](#) is a racial justice network of thousands of organizers, faith leaders, directly impacted families and organizations working at the intersections of gun violence, mass incarceration, and the criminalization of Black and Brown bodies. They organize communities directly impacted by gun violence, police violence and mass incarceration in order to build the necessary power and influence at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure that evidence-based solutions are being implemented. They have local chapters and partner organizations in 20 states and 70+ cities which include black and brown church denominations, congregations, violence prevention organizations and millennial movement organizations.

[PUSH Buffalo](#) is an organization dedicated to mobilizing residents to create strong neighborhoods with quality, affordable housing; to expand local hiring opportunities; and to advance economic and environmental justice in Buffalo.

[Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#) is a national, nonpartisan, anti-poverty nonprofit advancing policy solutions to improve the lives of people with low incomes. For over 50 years, they've developed practical yet visionary strategies for reducing poverty, promoting economic opportunity, and addressing institutional and racial barriers faced by people of color.

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action is the only national Jewish organization focused exclusively on progressive social change in the United States. They mobilize in cities and states across the country and advocating in Washington to win a new future, where all of us are safe and free.

Working Families Party brings together hundreds of thousands of members nationwide, coming together across our differences to make a better future for us all. They're a multiracial party that fights for workers over bosses and people over the powerful.

Movement for Black Lives is a national network of organizations and individuals creating a broad political home for Black people to learn, organize, & take action under the fundamental idea that we can achieve more together than we can separately.

Equal Justice USA is a national organization that works to transform the justice system by promoting responses to violence that break cycles of trauma. We work at the intersection of criminal justice, public health, and racial justice to elevate healing over retribution, meet the needs of survivors, advance racial equity, and build community safety.

Justice Strategies works to provide high-quality research to support grassroots movements and sensible policy reforms, promoting effective and humane solutions to criminal justice and immigration reform.

Justice Democrats is working to elect a mission-driven caucus that will fight for bold, progressive solutions to match the scope and scale of our current crises: skyrocketing inequality, a climate catastrophe, deepening systemic racism and a corporate takeover of our democracy.

Faith for Black Lives is an initiative of The People's Consortium for Human and Civil Rights, Inc., an advocacy organization committed to building beloved communities through radical love in action. This coalition of faith leaders advance an affirmative vision for systemic equality through grassroots organizing, leadership training, and issue-based advocacy.

People's Action and People's Action Institute were founded in 2016 to ignite a movement of millions that captures the rising demand for change in our society. Formed from the merger of powerful national organizations, we also come from a storied history of innovation and success.

Until Freedom has been on the frontlines fighting for justice and focusing on police accountability and criminal justice reform. Their theory of change integrates coalition building, on the ground organizing, direct action and training with policy advocacy and political education

Not Another Child, Inc. was established in 2006 after the senseless killing of Andrell Daron Napper; a victim of a stray bullet that came from a gun being held by a 15 year old. Not wanting his death to be in vain, Andrell's mother, Oresa Napper-Williams, and brother, Justin Napper, knew that despite this tragedy, something had to be done to positively change and influence the lives of other families. Therefore, through their loss, Not Another Child was birthed. They created the not for profit with the purpose of helping inner-city families who are directly impacted by violence.

[Woke Vote](#) empowers individuals to fight back against policies that are antithetical to our shared values. By meeting people where they are and teaching the fundamentals of congregation and community organizing, they are altering the political landscape as we know. Since their inception they have dramatically increased the percentage rate of turnout in their target districts.

[Life Camp, Inc](#) provides youth and families that have been impacted by violence the valuable tools they need to stay in school and out of the criminal justice system. We provide programs and other holistic approaches to reinforce self-esteem and respect for life among one another and also connect and mobilize youth to prevent and heal from violence in New York City's most underserved communities.

[Terrence Crutcher Foundation](#) is working to create just and liberated communities free from racial violence and harm. They do this through building power, policy advocacy, community development, and education. They engage community, law enforcement, and policymakers to identify, prevent, and confront racial inequities in Tulsa, Oklahoma and across the country.