

Louisville Metro Council - Public Safety Committee – Special Meeting
November 16, 2020 3:00 PM

Impetus perspective on the proposed civilian review board for Louisville.

Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Joe Reagan, speaking on behalf of Impetus for a Better Louisville. I am here today to provide a perspective shared by faith, education, social service, and business leaders who love Louisville. The late David Jones, Sr., brought us together, forming what is now known as Impetus for a Better Louisville. A great business leader, Mr. Jones never forgot that he came from one of Louisville's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. He believed that we could overcome systemic racism, persistent poverty, and widening educational and income gaps only by listening, understanding, and then taking action for a better Louisville.

That's why members of the Impetus public safety and justice reform work group, co-chaired by Jennifer Hancock, President of Volunteers of America and Steve Poe, CEO of Poe Companies, have spent the last months listening and learning from informed and passionate people -- from community activists, prosecutors, protestors, police, faith leaders, and elected officials. We seek to understand more and propose solutions.

We know we do not have all the answers. Still, our study of the systemic causes of violence and public safety has led us to a core belief: The path of racial equity and trust in the justice system is the only path to improving public safety and economic opportunity for all.

This path brings us here today. Thanks to the thoughtful work of the citizens' taskforce and this council, the ordinance before you, in its original form, presents a respectful, collaborative, and healing way forward. We support its passage to establish an independent Civilian Review Board

with full authority and accountability. Effective oversight of the Louisville Metro Police Department is only possible if oversight bodies are separate from the police department and represent communities we know are most impacted yet rarely included. The oversight body must be adequately funded, granted subpoena power, and equipped with full investigatory and disciplinary power.

Forward Through Ferguson, the report produced to drive needed change after the death of Michael Brown, describes mistrust in the justice system as "a sense of distance and secrecy about law enforcement, a sense that the work they do is inaccessible to the average citizen. This distance prevents the establishment of relationships based on mutual respect, allows for bias, and discourages the patience and understanding that communication and respectful relationships cultivate."

This ordinance accomplishes several essential aspects that relate directly to establishing trust. 1) The body is indeed independent, separate from the Office of Mayor. 2) It includes the Inspector General's essential role to provide professional, prompt investigations without passion or prejudice. 3) The plan for selecting board members is balanced, inclusive, and thoughtful. A thorough and transparent discussion over five months resulted in an entirely fair process. That type of deliberation helps to establish and foster trust and understanding among citizens. It also creates hope that the community is working quickly but diligently together. And in the prevailing culture of politics that make it seem impossible, Councilwoman McCraney has presented the council an ordinance that comes with broad and diverse support.

There is a fundamental reason we think citizens need to be at the law enforcement table.

It's not because they are experts in policing, but precisely because they are not. Their insight into the day-to-day lives of average citizens is the perspective that law enforcement agencies need to effectively protect and serve the community.

Civilian review of law enforcement activity is a significant step toward building a culture of awareness and serves as a formalized bridge into the community. While you may conclude that some amendment is needed to this ordinance, we urge you to do nothing that might weaken that bridge and everything to demonstrate its importance to community healing and trust.

Impetus for a Better Louisville

Sandra Frazier, *Chair*

Impetus Public Safety and Justice Reform Work Group

Jennifer Hancock, Volunteers of America, *Co-Chair*

Steve Poe, Poe Companies, *Co-Chair*

Steve Gault, Stephen C. Gault Co.

Jill Horn, Brown-Forman Foundation

Ted Nixon, D.D. Williamson

Dr. Walter Malone, Canaan Christian Church

Pat Mulloy, Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs

OJ Oleka, AntiRacismKy

Kerry Stemler, KM Stemler Company