



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEGISLATIVE CALL TO ACTION IN RESPONSE TO POLICE BRUTALITY

RICHMOND, VA – Despite repeated outcries from the public against acts of police brutality and misconduct, little has occurred to address these concerns. Since the implementation of Homeland Security policies, local police divisions have amplified their use of military-style weapons and tactics, and they have continued to follow policies that escalate moments of crisis into situations of tragedy. Communities of color are disproportionately affected by systemic racism and by policy structures that target low-income, black, brown, and marginalized members of our society. We have much work to do. As starting points, the Office of Senator Ghazala Hashmi issues a Call to Action for legislative responses at the federal, state, and local levels:

Federal Legislation:

Demilitarize local police divisions immediately. The use of armored vehicles, tanks, and military-style weapons on the streets of American cities is antithetical to the charge in front of police divisions: their responsibility is to protect citizens, not to take aggressive military postures against our own communities.

Create a nationwide policing database system. A database that tracks and reports actions by police divisions and individual officers is a vital first step in bringing accountability to the communities served.

State Legislation: *Senator Hashmi will be presenting these items of legislation.*

Ban the use of chokeholds and other lethal restraints. Aggressive measures such as chokeholds are the cause of injury and death; training in de-escalating situations of crisis is essential.

Implement the state-wide use of body cams. Equipment such as body cameras protect both officers and citizens, providing necessary documentation and transparency.

Ban the rehiring of police officers who have been previously cited for violence or abusive misconduct. A national database of abusive actions is a first step; local police divisions must be held to account for the hiring of officers who have a demonstrated tendency to respond violently and who are prone to escalating encounters with the public.



Create safe and effective channels for police officers to report abusive situations within their ranks or among those who supervise them. Internal cultures of fear, intimidation, or violence are often promulgated because individuals have no mechanisms to safely disclose abusive conditions or issues of misconduct.

Local Legislation:

Establish community review boards. Our local police divisions are accountable to the people and the communities they serve. Citizen voices and law enforcement accountability is vital for the establishment of trust and safe conduct.

Promote community policing programs. Community policing programs are demonstrated and effective vehicles for building trust among communities and local law enforcement; they foster servant-guardian attitudes among officers and support public responsiveness to the role that policing plays within the community.

Assess local police divisions for cultures of racism or tolerance of violence against citizens. Training in cultural competencies and developing open dialogue around issues of systemic racism and abuse of power is a part of effective community policing.

Cancel local government contracts for police to be stationed at schools. Research demonstrates that the presence of police in school divisions disproportionately targets action against students of color and contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline that results in a much higher rate of incarceration of young, African American men.

Senator Ghazala Hashmi represents Virginia's 10th Senatorial District (all of Powhatan County, parts of the city of Richmond, and parts of Chesterfield County). She serves on the following Senate committees: Education and Health; Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources; General Laws and Technology; and Local Government. Senator Hashmi chairs the Senate Subcommittee on Public Education She was elected to office in November 2019 in an historic election that flipped the seat blue and thus helped to ensure the Democratic majority in both the Virginia Senate and in the General Assembly. For more information, please visit www.ghazalahashmi.com

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