



June 10, 2020

Defund the Police?

It is my belief that the Chicago Police Department is beyond repair. If true reforms do not happen right away, we need to eliminate our current system. We need to replace our current system of how we handle public safety and the many issues faced by our communities.

Calls for defunding the police in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis have rung out from coast to coast. If the Chicago Police Department implements real reforms, it will be more responsive to our communities, especially black communities and other tax payers. Holding police truly accountable for their actions is showing support for our police, as recently stated by our Chicago Police Commissioner David Brown. This is not about individual police officers or bad apples. This is about a system that is inherently flawed. Other professionals should be funded to deal with issues that police are called for now but are not trained to handle, often resulting in the killing of black men and women. Examples include: crisis intervention for mental health issues; domestic issues; diversion to drug treatment; prevention of guns getting to our streets in the first place; social services and housing for those experiencing homelessness; and so many other issues.

We also know the system is flawed and is a waste of taxpayer dollars. According to reporting by CBS2 Chicago, in the last 10 years of lawsuit payouts involving the Chicago Police Department amounts to \$524,055,580. In 2018, the figure was \$97,801,760. The city's 2020 budget set aside \$153 million for legal settlements. The top three reasons for the lawsuits were excessive force, reversed convictions, and false arrests.

What about the Consent Decree – won't that solve the problem? There are many good suggestions in the Consent Decree, but there is one huge problem. As stated by Ed Bachrach and Austin Berg in their June 7, 2020 Chicago Tribune opinion piece: "In the aftermath of the 2014 Laquan McDonald murder, the city negotiated a consent decree with the Illinois attorney general for a federal judge to oversee the operations of the Chicago Police Department. Buried on Page 214 is the provision that "Nothing in the Consent Decree is intended to ... impair or conflict with the collective bargaining rights" of employees of the Chicago Police Department."

I want to see if the Chicago Police Department really wants a system that also protects police officers, provides them excellent and on-going training with input from the communities they serve, and makes them proud to be a member of the Chicago Police Department to improve safety in our communities.

I believe that the Chicago Police Department and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) have a choice. True reforms can be put in place, OR the Chicago Police Department should be defunded and replaced by a different system.

So, this is a call for the Chicago Police Department and the FOP to join to make substantial reforms and be at the table. As long as there are objections to reforms, we will not move forward, and we will continue to see more videos of black men and women being killed by police in Chicago. The time for real change is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LSF' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District