

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1317

June 4, 2020

Dear Community Leaders,

Thank you for the opportunity to attend The Resolution's listening session on June 3, 2020, and for sharing your policy suggestions for beginning to address police brutality and racial injustice. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are just recent, individual examples of the systemic problem of racism in our country. The protests and conversations happening across the nation are laying bare the pain felt by the Black community and the injustices they face today and have faced for generations.

The Resolution's police reform platform lays out thoughtful policies to address the institutional racism that is engrained in our police system. It is clear that we need to ensure our police forces receive the proper training to deescalate tense situations and to understand the communities they are serving. We also need better systems and processes in place to hold officers accountable for misconduct. I sincerely thank you for the time and effort that you put in to crafting meaningful proposals to bring about real change at the local, state and federal levels. I look forward to working with you and community leaders to move ideas into action.

After listening to you and other voices from Black and Brown communities in my district and across our country, I know that I, and Congress, must do more. Therefore, I am cosponsoring three pieces of legislation that will help move us forward. However, this is just a start; there is much more work to be done.

First, I have cosponsored a resolution (H.Res. 988) introduced by Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley (MA-07), Ilhan Omar (MN-05), Karen Bass (CA-37) and Barbara Lee (CA-13) **condemning police brutality and calling for renewed efforts to prevent police brutality moving forward**. This resolution acknowledges that police brutality is linked to the legacy of slavery, lynching and Jim Crow and that people of color are disproportionately hurt and killed by police. It also supports steps towards increased accountability, specifically calling for the establishment of independent, civilian boards to review police misconduct and for the Department of Justice to reinstitute its investigatory role and to urge courts to reconsider decisions that hinder oversight. Police brutality is unacceptable and sending this clear message as an institution is a necessary step in the right direction.

In addition, Congressman Hakeem Jeffries (NY-08) introduced the **Eric Garner Excessive Use of Force Prevention Act (H.R. 4408)**, which I have also cosponsored. This bill would make the deployment of chokeholds by law enforcement officers unlawful under federal criminal statute.

While some cities ban chokeholds, many do not. This bill would create a national standard against this awful practice.

I am also supporting a bill introduced by Congresswoman Frederica Wilson (FL-24) to establish a **Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act (H.R. 1636)**. The Commission would study conditions affecting black males and make proposals to alleviate these conditions. Black men and boys face unique hardships and injustices in this country that must be addressed at all levels of our society.

While those are important first steps, I am committed to ensuring that your voice is heard too. Thus, I will also be sharing your proposal, along with others from across my district, with House leadership and the Congressional Black Caucus as we work together to bring forth a comprehensive legislative agenda to make real change. I anticipate that this will lead to action in the House in the coming weeks. Ultimately, we will be judged by our actions – not our words.

As Pastor Julien said at the listening session, I know that – as a White woman – I cannot understand your pain and experiences. But, as your Representative, I can – and will – use my position of power to act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheri Bustos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress