

June 25, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL APPLAUDS CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF THE GEORGE FLOYD JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT OF 2020

Urges Senate to Pass Bill to Give State AGs Authority to Investigate Unconstitutional Policing

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul and New York Attorney General Letitia James today led a coalition of 20 attorneys general applauding the U.S. House of Representatives for its passage of significant police reform legislation. Raoul and the coalition are now urging the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020, which will give state attorneys general clear statutory authority to investigate patterns or practices of unconstitutional policing.

Among the provisions of H.R. 7120, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020, state attorneys general would have authority to investigate and address patterns or practices of unconstitutional policing, as well as to acquire data about use of excessive force by officers. Earlier this month, Raoul led a coalition of attorneys general in submitting [a letter to Congressional leadership](#) arguing that attorneys general should have authority to investigate and resolve patterns or practices of unconstitutional policing, particularly in the event that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) fails to use its authority to act.

“Meaningful police reform means attacking the decades-old, systemic unconstitutional policing in communities around the country, instead of taking a piecemeal approach that seeks to get rid of a few ‘bad apples.’ The status quo is not and has not been working for too long,” Raoul said. “The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 gives attorneys general statutory authority to collect excessive force data and conduct investigations. I urge the Senate to pass this a step toward the real police reform people around Illinois and the nation are demanding,”

Raoul and the coalition are calling on the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020, which gives state attorneys general authority to conduct pattern-or-practice investigations, issue subpoenas as part of pattern-or-practice investigations and, when necessary, take action in federal district court. The measure also authorizes appropriations of up to \$100 million for a federal grant program to help fund state attorneys general’s pattern-or-practice investigations during fiscal years 2021 to 2023.

Raoul and the coalition are calling for the Senate to pass the legislation immediately, as the DOJ has largely refused to address the pervasive problem of police misconduct and left communities without critical civil rights protections. In their June 4 letter to Congressional leaders, Raoul and the attorneys general highlighted the dramatic decrease in pattern-or-practice investigations initiated by the DOJ since 2017. The DOJ initiated 69 pattern-or-practice investigations between 1994 and 2017, which resulted in 40 court-enforceable consent decrees. Since January 2017, the DOJ has initiated zero pattern-or-practice investigations into police conduct and has not entered any consent decrees.

In addition to enabling attorneys general to conduct pattern-or-practice investigations, H.R. 7120 would also allow them to acquire data about the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers. Such data would be especially important when identifying law enforcement agencies that have above-average rates of excessive force complaints, which can also help identify at-risk law enforcement agencies before a devastating incident occurs. For example, the former Minneapolis police officer accused of killing 46-year-old George Floyd on May 25 had 18 prior complaints filed against him with the Minneapolis Police Department’s Internal Affairs.

Attorney General Raoul is committed to taking a comprehensive approach to addressing criminal justice and policing reform. The Attorney General's office continues to enforce the terms of a comprehensive consent decree entered to reform the Chicago Police Department, which was entered after Attorney General Sessions announced that the DOJ would no longer use its authority to hold officers and departments accountable for a pattern or practice of misconduct. The Attorney General's office has called upon the city to detail plans for meeting the 90 deadlines – out of 124 – missed during the first year of the consent decree's implementation. Raoul's office negotiated the court-enforceable consent decree after former Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke – who had received more than 20 complaints of official misconduct against him, including 10 related to excessive use of force – shot and killed 17-year-old Laquan McDonald.

In addition to enforcing the consent decree, Raoul's office is continuing to evaluate policies aimed at ensuring constitutional policing throughout Illinois. As a state senator, Raoul passed landmark reforms, including standards for officer-worn body cameras and the creation of a statewide database of officers under investigation. As Attorney General, Raoul is engaging in conversations with heads of law enforcement entities and other stakeholders to develop a police licensing proposal that will ensure professionalism, accountability, and transparency within police departments.

Joining Raoul in calling on the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.