

Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99081

Re: SB 46 – Law Enforcement Use of Force Registry

April 28, 2021

Dear Chair Hughes and Members of the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

On behalf of Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates – Alaska, I write today to voice Planned Parenthood’s support for Senate Bill 46. This bill takes a first step toward ensuring accountability against police violence by creating a statewide use-of-force database. PPAA stands with Black, Indigenous, people of color (“BIPOC”) communities as they demand change and seek to create communities that are safe and sustainable.

To truly achieve reproductive justice, all people must not only have the right to choose if and when to become parents, but also the right to raise their children in a safe and healthy environment. It is the same over-policing of Black and Indigenous bodies and their communities that makes the promise of reproductive freedom unattainable, and therefore Planned Parenthood’s values demands that we support efforts to reform and transform law enforcement. All people deserve to be protected from the threat of violence, and all parents deserve the ability to raise children in environments that are free from violence.

SB 46 takes an important first step towards ensuring accountability of policing to better serve the people in Alaska. As our state and country continues to grapple with police brutality, this bill makes marginal improvements toward ensuring transparency and accountability by requiring Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) to establish a statewide use-of-force database. According to the Mapping Police Violence database, Alaska is tragically home to the second highest rate of police killings in the country, and the second highest rate of police violence against Black and Indigenous people.¹ Mandatory reporting of incidents that employ deadly use of force and the collection of demographic details is one critical step to having a full picture of police behavior and addressing police violence. To improve transparency, we recommend that the public database be available on DPS’s website, with the data available for exporting and analysis.

While SB 46 is a simple, commonsense step in the right direction toward addressing police brutality, to meaningfully address police violence, the police as we know it need to be completely re-imagined and held accountable. As health care experts, our first priority is the health and safety of our patients, and that concern does not stop once our patients leave our doors; we know when our BIPOC patients – especially our Black and Indigenous patients – live in a society in which law enforcement disproportionately target and harasses BIPOC communities. Alaska must take steps to dismantle the systemic racism that permeates our public institutions and systems, including both our criminal justice system and our health care system. Only then will our communities meaningfully achieve reproductive freedom.

¹ “There is Police Violence in Alaska,” *Juneau Empire*, June 4, 2020. Available at <https://www.juneauempire.com/opinion/opinion-there-is-police-violence-in-alaska/>



Alliance Advocates - Alaska

We know BIPOC communities have been historically over-policed and are more likely to be imprisoned for misdemeanors and minor crimes, ripping families apart and contributing to the economic disenfranchisement of BIPOC communities, including our patients. The rates of incarceration in Alaska have grown dramatically in the last 40 years, with Black and American Indian & Alaska Native people being incarcerated at four to five times the rate of white people in Alaska.² Approximately 40 percent of people incarcerated in Alaska's jurisdiction identify as American Indian & Alaska Native people despite only making up about 15 percent of the state's population. Similarly, 7 percent of those incarcerated were Black people despite Black people constituting only 3 percent of Alaska's population.³ About one-in-three people killed by the police is an Alaska Native person, and a Black person in Alaska is 3.3 times more likely to be killed by police as a white person.⁴ This over-policing of BIPOC communities, the criminalization of BIPOC bodies, and police violence imposes significant transgenerational trauma, directly harming the health and economic security of these families.

As our state reckons with the generations of structural racism that underpins all of our systems, we should be looking to center the leadership of BIPOC communities and to invest in community-based solutions to reimagine all institutions founded on white supremacy, including policing and health care. The murders of Breonna Taylor, Aaron Bailey, George Floyd, Cody Eyre, Kevin McNaulty, and countless others highlight the need for drastic systemic change, including external accountability and policies, to ensure our communities can live free of violence.

We all deserve to live in a world where we are equally protected and have access to the resources we need to be healthy, safe, and free from harm. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Morgan Lim
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Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates – Alaska

² Alaska Profile, *Prison Policy Initiative* (2018). Available at: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/AK.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mapping Police Violence, *State Comparison Tool* (2021). Available at: <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/states>; Michelle Theriault Boots, *43 people have been killed by Alaska law enforcement officers in the last 5 ½ years. Here's what we learned by examining each case*, Anchorage Daily News (Aug. 2020). Available at: <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2020/08/03/43-people-have-been-killed-by-alaska-law-enforcement-officers-in-the-last-five-and-a-half-years-heres-what-we-learned-by-examining-each-case/>