

February 18, 2021

Alaska State Senate

State Affairs Committee members, C/O [Senator.Mike.Shower@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Mike.Shower@akleg.gov)

Judiciary Committee members, C/O Senator.Lora.Reinbold@akleg.gov

RE: Support for Senate Bills 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 46, to reform policing

Senators:

I urge you to pass Senate Bills 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 46 to ban chokeholds, control shooting at vehicles, de-escalate confrontations, and track police use of force statewide.

*We know police misuse of force can and does happen in Alaska.*

Police over-response intimidates citizens and keeps them from calling for help. Consequently, the whole community is less safe. Case in point:

Just over a week ago, in early February, Wasilla police pinned a young Alaska Native woman with a knee to her jaw, and then hogtied her hands to her ankles, and carried her trussed body like a hunting kill. The Wasilla police tactics were violent, degrading, and intentionally painful. The police tactics, legal or not, were clearly out of proportion to the unarmed woman's disruption in a Wal-Mart store.

As a direct result of the Wasilla case, a few days later, a young relative of mine was afraid to call the police when he was harassed and followed for several blocks in Anchorage's Midtown. My relative is a minority, and the street person who harassed him was both an ethnic minority and apparently intoxicated. My relative, although afraid for his personal safety, did not want to feel responsible for a possibly violent police response to his harasser.

Regarding SB 46, an open public record of police use of force is long overdue. We can't improve police policies unless we have a public record of forceful encounters. I am haunted by the police shootings of disturbed citizens over the years, sometimes by SWAT teams instead of de-escalation: the young albino man, the Pacific Islander with the baseball bat, the man with a BB gun, the recluse in his own home in Upper Huffman, another disturbed man in his own home in Eagle River. That is short list from my memory. We need complete public records: a statewide cataloging of police use of force.

In 2020, Alaskans demonstrated in many communities following the horrendous street execution of George Floyd, and other police violence. You can take steps to avoid police misuse of force here in Alaska. Pass SB 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 46.

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Senator.Tom.Begich@akleg.gov