

First Alaskans Institute

March 25, 2021

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
State Capitol Room 417
Juneau AK, 99801
Senator.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov
Phone: 907-465-4930

Honorable Senator Gray-Jackson,

This letter is to express support of SB 1, SB 2, SB 3, SB 4, SB 7, and SB 46 proposed by Senator Gray-Jackson. While each of these are separate bills, they address law enforcement reform that is essential to the protection of our communities.

First Alaskans Institute is a statewide Alaska Native non-profit organization that works to educate key decision makers about our peoples, advance our ways of life, and amplify the voices of our communities. As such, we stand in support of SB 1, SB 2, SB 3, SB 4, SB 7, and SB 46, as they directly address the urgency of adopting meaningful police accountability reforms.

We stand in support of [SB1 – Chokehold Ban](#), due to the importance of outlining the justification of the use of force by Alaska’s peace officers. The use of chokeholds by law enforcement has proven deadly. We should be looking at all other reasonable alternatives that do not put our people’s lives at risk.

We stand in support of [SB2 – Peace Officers: De-Escalation, Misconduct](#), as reporting acts of misconduct by peace officers is a vital step in creating an environment of accountability within the Alaska State Law Enforcement. Considering that de-escalation is the safest option for peace officers in the field and the subjects who comply, it is important we are actively aiming to improve our de-escalation procedures.

We stand in support of [SB3 – Police Officers: Oral Warning/De-Escalate](#), in relation to SB1 and SB2. In acknowledging the powers and responsibilities our peace officers have, we need to raise the standard of conduct in order to encourage excellence in the field. Requiring a peace officer to attempt to de-escalate a situation through the use of non-lethal methods of engagement before discharging a firearm falls under that encouragement of excellence. Communication strategies, including the requiring of a peace officer to provide an oral warning before the discharge of a firearm under SB3, are just as important.

We stand in support of [SB4 – Prohibit Peace Off. Shoot Moving Vehicle](#). We should be reconsidering the excessive leeway given to our peace officers in the

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Mission

True to identity, heritage, and values, Alaska Natives are informed and engaged in leading the decisions that shape the future.

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use of deadly force. Firing into moving vehicles creates significant risks and constitutes excessive force. We should be discouraging these tactics.

We stand in support [SB7 – State Trooper Policies: Public Access](#), because of the importance of public transparency in police accountability. Alaskans deserve access to the policies and procedures of our law enforcement. SB7 gives people access to the steps that are being taken by the department, in ensuring the advancement of accountability measures.

We stand in support of [SB46 – Law Enforcement: Registry: Use of Force](#) in encouraging the structural and cultural changes that are needed to restore trust within our communities. By implementing public safety reforms and reporting requirements, we are moving in the right direction to prevent violence at the hands of unnecessary force.

This is an opportunity for the State of Alaska to recognize, through an equitable lens, the overdue change needed to prevent violence upon our Indigenous Peoples and to rebuild trust between our communities and the State. By increasing accountability, we aim to address the unjustified uses of force that have resulted in the deaths and injuries of Alaskans. Public transparency will be crucial in facing the challenges that lay ahead in order to disrupt the patterns that are adversely impacting Alaskan Natives, amongst other minorities across Alaska.

Moving forward, we urge the Senate to raise the current standards of conduct in order to address overdue change within our law enforcement agencies across Alaska. By passing Senate bills 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 46, we will be taking tangible steps needed to strengthen relations between police and the respective communities in which they serve. When people live in fear of their interactions with law enforcement, it creates an unsafe environment for both our communities and the officers involved. We have been given an opportunity to begin to repair that trust.

Should you have any questions or require any assistance moving forward to clarify the importance of SB 1, SB 2, SB 3, SB 4, SB 7, or SB 49, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Respectfully,



La quen náay (Elizabeth) Medicine
Crow (Haida/Tlingit)
President/CEO



Wáahlaal Gíidaak (Barbara) Blake
(Haida/Tlingit/Ahtna)
Director, Alaska Native Policy Center

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ALASKA BLACK CAUCUS

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To Whom It May Concern

February 11, 2021

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Black Caucus in support of criminal justice reform and the following bills under consideration by the Alaska Legislature.

SB1. An Act prohibiting the use of chokeholds by peace officers; and relating to justification of use of force by peace officers.

SB2. An Act relating to reporting acts of misconduct by peace officers; relating to de-escalation procedures used by peace officers; relating to peace officer certificates; and relating to the Alaska Police Standards Council.

SB3. An Act relating to the Alaska Police Standards Council; requiring a peace officer to attempt to de-escalate a situation and use alternative non-lethal methods of engagement before discharging a firearm; and requiring a peace officer to provide an oral warning before discharging a firearm.

SB4. An Act relating to justification of use of force by a police officer; and relating to shooting at a moving vehicle.

SB46. An Act relating to the Alaska Police Standards Council; relating to municipal correctional officers and municipal correctional employees; making municipal police officers subject to police standards; establishing a statewide use-of-force database in the Department of Public Safety; requiring a municipality that employs a person as a municipal police officer or in a municipal correctional facility, the Department of Corrections, or the Department of Public Safety to report for inclusion in the database incidents of use of force by state and municipal police, probation, parole, and correctional officers and municipal correctional facility employees; and providing for an effective date.

SB7. An Act requiring the Department of Public Safety to publish certain policies and procedures on the department's internet website.

The Alaska Black Caucus submits that these legislative enactments would establish greater transparency with public law enforcement and improve the level of trust by the community in local public safety organizations.

Sincerely,

Celeste Hodge Growden
President/VCEO

cc: Alaska Black Caucus Justice Committee

The purpose of the Alaska Black Caucus shall be to assert the Constitutional Rights of Black people:

(1) by involvement in the decision making processes of the community and state by becoming a contributing part of those duly authorized and representative bodies affecting the lives and livelihoods of Black people; (2) by actively supporting and working in areas which help to advance the educational, cultural, political, and economic well-being of the Black community; (3) by acting as a liaison and coordinating entity for the various minority interests within the community and State; (4) by making available accurate and timely information on relevant issues and areas of concern to minority people; (5) by recreating awareness that the struggle to achieve total equality has not yet been achieved; (6) by emphasizing the ever-increasing need for Blacks and minorities to make renewed attempts toward attaining these goals.

February 15, 2021

Dear Senator Elvi Grey-Jackson,

The summer of 2020 was one for the history books. Not only was the world rocked by a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, but we also saw a massive uprising in the United States against police violence and brutality. The George Floyd and Breonna Taylor uprising shook society to its core and highlighted contradictions that can no longer be overlooked or ignored. The truth is, is that the United States is a republic built on the violent exploitation of Black and Indigenous Americans. This country must have a difficult conversation with itself and begin to implement change. Alaska is no exception.

There is serious mistrust between the community and police. Not only is this a national problem, it is a local one as well. Public safety is more than just a low body count, or death toll. It is transparency and accountability. It is the government, developing and implementing policies that are necessary to facilitate public trust and confidence in law enforcement. It's more than coffee with a cop, a ride-along, or a public relations campaign that tells Alaskans what an excellent job the police are doing. It is having difficult conversations, acknowledging past wrongs, and striving for improvement. That is why we support Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson's (Anchorage) proposed public safety policy changes.

Alaska Senate bills (SB) 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 46 are vital and necessary if Alaska is going to build public trust and confidence in law enforcement. For example, SB 1 would regulate the use of chokeholds, SB 2 would require that law enforcement deescalate volatile situations before using deadly force, and SB 46 would establish a statewide use-of-force database. Transparency and accountability are public safety choices and Alaska must adopt a modern approach to public safety. The state is woefully behind. Not only will this protect the public, but it also protects law enforcement. These bills create a dynamic in which the public and law enforcement are partners in public safety, not adversaries. For this environment to be established it requires trust and as of today, the state of Alaska does not have the requisite policies to begin this long and difficult process.

We are calling on the 32nd Alaska Legislature to pass these bills and for Gov. Mike Dunleavy to sign them into law. As every Alaskan knows, the state is facing an unprecedented social and economic crisis. Public safety changes of this nature are not secondary and are equally important as we rebuild Alaska. Public safety is critical infrastructure, and these bills should be considered as such.

February 18, 2021

Alaska State Senate

State Affairs Committee members, C/O 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.

Nancy Pease, 19300 Villages Scenic Parkway, Anchorage, Alaska 99516

Cc: Senator.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov; Senator.Roger.Holland@akleg.gov;
Senator.Tom.Begich@akleg.gov



**GREATER FAIRBANKS NAACP
UNIT 1001**

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March 10, 2021

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
District I
State Capitol Room 417
Juneau, Alaska, 99801

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

The Greater Fairbanks Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) - Unit 1001 would like to express excitement and encouragement for bills SB 1, SB 2, SB 3, SB 4, SB 7, and SB 46 that you are sponsoring. These bills in part represent the core of our mission and our endeavor to bring about meaningful reform in our police departments. We encourage you to continue your efforts and Alaska leadership in moving these bills forward.

Our Branch is currently working on voicing *8 Can't Wait* principles at our local level, including City Council and Borough Assembly meetings, but we believe having the bills become state law would have more far-reaching effects on the changes so desperately needed in law enforcement. We need to bring about sustainable policies that propel Alaska along a path of changing the attitudes and actions that drive toxic behaviors displayed by law enforcement in our state, and that also stimulates the flow of distrust, hostility and fear in our communities.

It is our hope to shed light on these bills locally, because as we all know, an informed individual with the right support can change the world. Please keep the Fairbanks Branch NAACP apprised of developments and direction of your legislations as they advance forward. Also, let us know how we may further assist or enhance your efforts in our community.

Again, thank you for your leadership as a champion in our state toward police reform, and your obvious commitment to see reform take place through the introduction of these bills. We are energized and are encouraged by your voice and steps in the right direction. The Greater Fairbanks Branch of the NAACP is in support of significant and meaningful change to local and state policing.

Best Wishes,

Montean R. Jackson

Montean Jackson, President
Greater Fairbanks Branch NAACP
Unit 1001



Feb. 18, 2021

Re: Support for SB46

Dear Senator Elvi Gray Jackson,

We at the Community United for Safety and Protection would like to express our appreciation and support for SB46, **"An Act relating to the Alaska Police Standards Council; relating to municipal correctional officers and municipal correctional employees; making municipal police officers subject to police standards; establishing a statewide use-of-force database in the Department of Public Safety; requiring a municipality that employs a person as a municipal police officer or in a municipal correctional facility, the Department of Corrections, or the Department of Public Safety to report for inclusion in the database incidents of use of force by state and municipal police, probation, parole, and correctional officers and municipal correctional facility employees; and providing for an effective date."**

As a group of current and former sex workers, sex trafficking survivors, and our allies working towards safety and protection for everyone in Alaska's sex trade, we have found that it is very important to hold law enforcement in Alaska to much higher and clearer standard of transparency when it comes to access to public records regarding policing by putting this much needed language into the Alaska Statutes.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Terra Burns

Maxine Doogan
Kat McElroy
Amber Nickerson