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Minnesota Legislature's People of Color and Indigenous Caucus discusses legislative response to the murder of George Floyd

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Today, the Minnesota Legislature's People of Color and Indigenous (POCI) Caucus discussed legislative responses to the murder of George Floyd. The POCI Caucus intends to make police and criminal justice reform a top priority of the likely June special session and into the future.

"George Floyd's death was due to a horrifying lack of humanity, and Minnesotans are far too familiar with the pain and trauma resulting from violence at the hands of law enforcement. This simply cannot be how policing works in our state," said Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL – Saint Paul), chair of the House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Division. "I'm grateful to partner with a strong group of legislators – with my colleagues of color and those from Indigenous communities leading the way – who are committed to equity, justice, and accountability so Black Minnesotans can live with the inherent dignity every human being deserves."

"For too long, people in my community have been told they will have to wait for the systemic changes necessary to ensure people of color can don't have to live in fear of law enforcement," said Rep. Rena Moran (DFL – Saint Paul), chair of the People of Color and Indigenous (POCI) Caucus. "They are tired of waiting for reform, tired of waiting for accountability, and tired of waiting for justice. George Floyd should be alive, and it's time for all hands to come on deck and fundamentally change how police interact with Black men and boys."

"The struggle for justice is not about black versus white, minority versus majority, or liberal versus conservative," said Rep. Hodan Hassan (DFL - Minneapolis). "It is about right versus wrong and we all should be on the right side of this."

"For too long we have failed or ignored those who are suffering and have asked for our action," said Rep. Mohamud Noor (DFL - Minneapolis). "Institutional racism and injustice exist throughout our society, our economy and our laws, from our criminal justice system to our educational system to our housing to our public health. Now is the time to act."

"While George Floyd's killing was at the hands of four police individual police officers, structural racism and implicit bias have prevailed for generations, causing a great deal of trauma in our communities of color," said Rep. Fue Lee (DFL - Minneapolis). "These proposals are the first step in addressing this trauma, and we will work together to make systemic changes so this violence stops happening in our communities."

"For too long the voices and experiences of the Black community have been ignored," said Rep. Ruth Richardson (DFL - Mendota Heights). "Those closest to the pain must have their voices uplifted, their experiences amplified, and must be leading the change that our voices have been crying out for centuries."

Legislation under consideration includes the following:

Reform the investigation and prosecution of officer-involved deaths and wrongful actions

- Move primary investigation and prosecution of officer-involved deaths to the Attorney General's Office
- Modify use-of-force laws to prevent wrongful deaths

- Create a new crime for unjustified use of force that results in death or great bodily harm
- Strengthen independence of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) and design an alternative independent body to their jurisdiction
- Conduct a review of Medical Examiners to ensure independence and timely action
- Change civil liability statute of limitations for families of individuals killed by police

Increase police accountability and transparency

- Collect and centralize for public access, real-time data on deadly-force encounters
- Establish law enforcement-citizen oversight councils to provide needed community involvement in policing
- Establish a Critical Incident Review process for officer-involved deaths to inform policy change and prevention

Raise standards of conduct and support officer excellence

- Change the laws governing agreements that impede discipline of officers seriously betraying the public trust
- Reform the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board to increase oversight of officer licensure and training
- Expand the POST Licensing Board with more public membership and racial diversity
- Create a legal duty for officers to intervene in the wrongful use of force by fellow officers.
- Create a POST Board Community Policing Rulemaking Council
- Expand training in de-escalation, mental health crisis intervention, and responding to people with disabilities
- Prohibit use of “Bullet-Proof Warrior” style use of force training
- Offer peer-to-peer counseling for peace officers and establish privacy-protections for officers in counseling

Partner officers with the communities they serve

- Create powerful incentives for officers to live in the communities they serve by lifting the state ban on local-residence requirements
- Provide new resources to increase diversity in police forces

Repair and build community trust and create community-centered public safety

- Provide state funding for programs for community-based intervenors and problem-solvers that can partner with local peace officers.
- Increase investment in community-based mental health and trauma-informed services
- Direct POST board to develop model policy on use of force in responding to peaceful protests

Legislation that hasn't already been introduced is still being drafted with bill language expected Friday evening. The House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Division will hold a hearing on the proposals next week.