

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Diane Feinstein
Ranking Member
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer, Chairman Graham, and Ranking Member Feinstein:

We write you as the leaders of the two Senate caucuses and the Chair and Ranking member of the Judiciary Committee. We ask you to help our country by finding a path to a bipartisan police reform bill. The nation needs it, and the Senate should rise to the occasion.

Recent weeks have seen nationwide protests about police violence against African Americans, motivated by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. These were heartbreaking deaths, and the anger that people feel must be addressed. We have all had the experience of working with police officers at the local, state and federal levels who bring honor to the profession, but it is also clear that systemic reforms are needed.

Both parties recognize the need for action. Senators Booker and Harris, together with Democratic co-sponsors, have introduced the Justice in Policing Act of 2020. Senator Scott, with Republican co-sponsors, has introduced the JUSTICE Act.

We strongly believe that the Senate needs to show that it can carefully deliberate on such a weighty topic and produce a high-quality bill. And we have a process for doing so. The two bills should be taken up by the Judiciary Committee with hearings that will illuminate the pros and cons of each approach. The members of the Committee should be given the opportunity to debate and amend the proposals. And the Committee should promptly report its best version of a police reform bill to the full Senate.

The Senate should take the matter up on the floor before the August recess with ample debate and amendment opportunities. We all have life experiences and professional expertise to bring to this debate.

If we follow this process—not rushing for a headline but taking the time to get it right—we can find a bipartisan path to real reform. But we are concerned that the current path—a quick floor vote with no committee hearings on the bills, no committee debate, no committee amendments, a truncated or non-existent floor amendment process—guarantees an outcome too frequently seen

in this body: a partisan failure. And we worry that an unsuccessful short-cut process will disappoint those who desire real change and even inflame current tensions.

The issue is too important, and the moment is too powerful to play political games. Lives are on the line, and emotions are high. Divisions are obvious and raw. The country needs healing. The Senate should be an instrument of healing, and we can do that by treating this opportunity with the seriousness it deserves.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tim Kaine
Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator