

Statements of Support for Revised Use of Force Policy

Louis Bordi, President, New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP); Chief of Police, Voorhees Police Department:

“New Jersey’s Police Chiefs are proud to work alongside our law enforcement colleagues and the Attorney General in the ongoing work of moving policing forward and keeping our state at the forefront of continuous improvement.”

Rev. Dr. Charles F. Boyer, Founder, Salvation and Social Justice:

“Salvation and Social Justice is pleased that the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office is moving in the right direction with this Use of Force Policy revision. The revision better articulates the standards of force with new provisions regarding imminent danger, the use of Tasers, and officer pursuits of civilians. These policy improvements create a greater level of transparency and increase officer accountability.

“Our mission is to foster a community where people are not marginalized and policed on account of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status. This is the moral duty of New Jersey’s criminal justice system. We look forward to continuing this Use of Force Policy dialogue with the Attorney General’s Office, community partners, and constituents. There is still much work to be done; we are focused on making further progress in terms of police accountability, use of force standards, improved officer training, and elimination of asphyxiation techniques. This continued collaboration will promote justice and equity across the State of New Jersey.”

Zulma Cabrera, President, Hispanic American Law Enforcement Association:

“I provided my support to the Attorney General’s Office Use of Force Policy working group. It has been an amazing experience to be able to come together with all the agencies involved to complete a policy that will address and ensure everyone’s safety. The working group has committed many hours to this important effort in order to provide the public and all law enforcement departments with the tools to assure all situations are handled safely and properly. I commend the Attorney General’s Office for allowing us the opportunity to be a part of this process.”

Patrick Colligan, President, New Jersey State Policemen’s Benevolent Association:

“The revised Use of Force policy is another important tool in enhancing the professionalism and integrity of New Jersey’s law enforcement profession. This policy makes key changes that will protect our officers on the job while ensuring the public that New Jersey police remain the best trained in the nation. This policy developed after weeks of collaborative discussions amongst the State PBA and other stakeholders and we are grateful to the Attorney General’s Office for incorporating our suggestions.”

James M. Gannon, President, Sheriff’s Association of New Jersey; Morris County Sheriff:

“New Jersey law enforcement has a long history of working to better serve the citizenry by regularly improving operations and procedures. My colleagues in the Sheriff’s Association of New Jersey (SANJ) and our partners in the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP) continue to impress me with their eagerness to find better ways to do a difficult job. That is why it was our honor to participate in the review of the Use of Force Guidelines with the Office of the Attorney General and to explore again how we may best serve the public.

“In the words of leadership expert Jim Collins, ‘Good is the Enemy of Great.’ There is always room for improvement. However, my counterpart in NJSACOP, Chief Lou Bordi and I agreed from the start that no group of law enforcement professionals is more vigilant about performing their sworn duties in the best way possible than the men and women in uniform serving the citizens of New Jersey. While outside scrutiny of any culture of service is always necessary, this review only left Lou and I even more impressed with our fellow officers because, once again, they have admirably demonstrated a willingness to accept greater discipline, despite these uncertain and difficult times, for their very difficult vocation.

“Law Enforcement is a dangerous profession. According to the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial, line of duty deaths are already up 56 percent this year—198 officers killed so far in 2020 compared to 127 for all of last year. My fervent hope is that the great people of the State of New Jersey once again begin to consciously and openly express their appreciation for the job these guardians perform on a daily basis. The Officers need and deserve your support, and your respect!

“Please visit www.njsheriff.org and www.njsacop.org and you will see the thread of professionalism and accountability throughout our organizations. It is central to both Chief Bordi’s, and my own, stated missions!”

Commissioner Carole Johnson, New Jersey Department of Human Services:

“By prioritizing the importance of law enforcement de-escalation techniques, increasing the emphasis on listening and explaining, and expanding law enforcement knowledge about mental health and disabilities, the Attorney General is taking actions that will better protect individuals in New Jersey with mental health conditions and disabilities, who are often particularly vulnerable in law enforcement interactions. We look forward to working collaboratively with law enforcement, community leaders, individuals with lived experience and their families and guardians, to create a safer and more just New Jersey for all.”

Christy Lopez, Professor from Practice and Faculty Co-Director, Innovative Policing Program, Georgetown University Law Center:

“There has been a lot of talk about police reform over the last six months. With Attorney General Grewal’s comprehensive, statewide changes to police use of force, New Jersey

provides a roadmap for turning words into actions that can prevent policing harm and transform police culture. Importantly, the changes today go far beyond simply revising policy. New Jersey is increasing data collection and reporting and ensuring that officers will be trained in how to avoid unnecessary force and how to intervene to prevent other officers from committing misconduct. Georgetown Law's Innovative Policing Program is happy to support this work through its ABLE Project active bystandership training."

Robert May, President Emeritus /Founder of The New Jersey Asian American Law Enforcement Officers Association (NJAALEOA); Detective (Retired), Port Authority of NY & NJ Police Department

"For a number of months during 2020 a group of professional law enforcement officers from different ranks and ethnic backgrounds assembled for the purpose of reviewing and updating the current Use of Force Policy used in the State of New Jersey. Every member of this working group used due diligence in regards to this complicated issue before the final draft document was forwarded to the Office of the New Jersey Attorney General for review and final revision. This document addresses issues that were not thought of 10, 15 or 20 years ago. I am confident each and every law enforcement officer in this state will rise to the occasion as they are guided by this updated Use of Force Policy. I would like to thank those for the privilege of being part of this extraordinary working group. I would also wish a safe and fulfilling career to the men and women who protect and serve 24 hours a day seven days a week."

Jiles H. Ship, President, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) New Jersey; Past National President, NOBLE

"The public outrage after the senseless killing of George Floyd fueled the national demand for review of excessive force policies in law enforcement. We acknowledge the importance of this first step and NOBLE NJ looks forward to continuing our work with the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General to develop a comprehensive policy that will ensure the safety of all New Jerseyans and law enforcement officers."

Amol Sinha, Executive Director, ACLU-NJ:

"The Attorney General's use-of-force directive incorporates measures that have extraordinary potential to protect people's rights and safety, and it creates important accountability requirements for law enforcement— with the understanding that even the strongest use-of-force policies are only as effective as their implementation and enforcement.

"At the core of the directive is an emphasis that law enforcement's role is to treat all people they encounter with respect and dignity, value the sanctity of life, and work to deescalate difficult situations. This framework, if implemented effectively, could serve to

avoid tragic outcomes and protect fundamental rights, particularly in Black and brown communities which often are the subject of over-policing. We look forward to working with the Office of the Attorney General, stakeholders, and advocates to inform further reforms and to help New Jersey's law enforcement agencies fulfill the directive, both in letter and spirit.”

Richard T. Smith, President, NAACP New Jersey State Conference:

“Establishing a rigorous statewide policy focused on reducing use of force is an important step forward to achieving police accountability. We support the guiding principle that officers must make every effort to preserve and protect human life and the safety of all persons and never deploy force in a discriminatory manner. We appreciate being included in discussions during the revision process and look forward to future engagement as the new policy with accompanying training rolls out. While we recognize that more work must be done to improve police-community trust, we applaud Attorney General Grewal's leadership and commitment.”

Esther Suarez, President, County Prosecutors Association of New Jersey; Hudson County Prosecutor:

“This first-of-its-kind policy rightly emphasizes expanding the use of de-escalation as the primary tool for officers and that use of force should always be a last resort and only deployed once clear verbal warning and an opportunity to comply have been made. Among the many important measures announced today, we find the specific attention to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and offering training and tools to officers incredibly important. Additionally, creating a first-in-the-nation public portal that documents every use of force by law enforcement is a transformative and important step toward transparency and trust building between law enforcement and the public.”

Joseph D. Wysocki, Police Chief, Camden County Police Department:

“The Camden County Police Department seeks to establish policy and practices that are progressive in nature and representative of a contemporary policing culture. We fully support the implementation of the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General Use of Force Policy, which promotes and codifies modern-day law enforcement ethos and ideals, anchored in the sanctity of human life.”