



March 4, 2020

Dear House Judiciary Committee and Chairman Weissman:

My name is Dr. Apryl Alexander and I am a professor in psychology and a member of Black Lives Matter 5280. Black Lives Matter 5280 is writing to offer support for HB20-1287 Colorado Rights Act. I am unable to be in the committee in person today; but the bill is important enough that I am providing written testimony and have asked that it be read during the hearing.

Over 300 Black lives are taken by police each year in the United States. A recently released article from *The Denver Post*, detailing police-involved shootings in Colorado in 2019, found a disproportionate number of Black and Latinx people were shot by police both fatally and non-fatally. Additionally, six people died by suicide after police fired at them. Several months ago, Black Lives Matter 5280 sat with Elijah McClain's mother, a 23-year-old male with medical issues in Aurora who was killed by police while walking home, unarmed, from his local store.

In 2020, the morning newspapers the headlines have read:

- Westminster police sergeant cleared of criminal charges in September shooting
- Denver police officers keep jobs after fatally shooting man in pursuit of incorrectly identified suspect
- Weld County jury acquits Fort Lupton police officer who shot and killed man last year
- Denver police officer suspended for 2 weeks after conviction for off-duty drunk driving (with a blood alcohol level twice the legal limit, might I add)

Each of these articles highlights the lack of police accountability, which already costs taxpayers (including victims' families) millions of dollars each year in settlements. The doctrine of qualified immunity has been held in many of these cases to immunize officers from accountability for their actions. Regular Coloradans, and most particularly Black Coloradans, are held to standards of accountability. Our communities are asking the same for our government and state officials. Police violence results in a number of negative societal, physical, and psychological outcomes. A 2018 study by Jacob Bor and colleagues found more than 38,000 Black Americans in their study were exposed to one or more police killings of an unarmed Black person, which resulted in adverse effects on mental health in the months following the exposure.

HB20-1287 aims to uphold Coloradan's rights and protections under the Colorado constitution, increase accountability for state-sanctioned violence, and reduce the expression of structural racism. HB20-1287 extends beyond police-involved shootings and would also uphold legal protections for pregnant women and transgender individuals in our jails and individuals with mental illness in our prisons from maltreatment. Therefore, BLM 5280 is in support of HB20-1287.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Apryl Alexander".

Dr. Apryl Alexander
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