

Dear Members of the Committee,

I'm testifying in behalf of myself and for Safe Access Colorado (SACO), a Colorado chapter of Americans for Safe Access, the largest national organization of members advocating for patients rights and access to medical cannabis. Our members at SACO and I support SB-217 and ask that you please give a YES vote to hold police accountable. We can't unsee all the videos of all the black lives murdered in police custody. Once you see this and take witness to the ongoing injustice to black lives, we have to take action. That is why we are protesting in the streets until we can hold all "peace officers" accountable for their excessive force and abuse of power. Enough is enough.

I'm 37 and have lived in Colorado for 12 years and if you ask me if I trust the police, the answer is NO- I don't. I can't. I've seen police brutality up close and if my husband was black, I don't think he would have survived his incident of police brutality by Denver Police Dept in 2010. It was 2 weeks before moving out of our studio apartment in Capitol Hill Denver, my husband got the cops called on him for playing loud music in the apartment. I was at a bachelorette party when I got the 911 text from my friends alarming me that Rob (my husband now, boyfriend then) got beat up, tazed and arrested by Denver PD. After a terrifying night of talking to neighbors to piece what had happened, I heard the following: The police tazed him multiple times, Rob was screaming and he got dragged into the hallway after denying that the police could come inside. Multiple times, the officer punched him and tazed him. My neighbors told me that they saw the arresting officers laughing, high-fiving while they dragged him out and put him into the police car. This was all for loud music! My husband has never been in an adult fist fight and he didn't deserve the cops to barge into his place beating him up and tazing him SEVERAL times. After I frantically figured out what to do, I borrowed money and bailed him out the next day. I immediately took him to the ER to get him checked out, and get pictures/proof of what happened. I wanted us to file a police report to demand justice! He was punched and bruised in places that we're not visible to the naked eye, behind his head and in his sides. We were lucky to talk to a lawyer, who advised us that he wouldn't take the case and recommend someone who could. Basically, we were told that nothing would come from this. At 26 and 28 years old, we didn't have the money and means for a lawsuit charging Denver PD for police brutality, something they've been known for doing written about in Westword, Denver Post etc. To this day, I am so frustrated because we decided to stay silent. I have lost all trust with law enforcement. I know CO friends who have been abused by the cops, from beatings, rape, sexual assault, to murder and I must mention all the black human lives continually seen murdered by hands of police.

10 years later here we are in the midst of a new revolution. We have the opportunity to hold the bad police accountable. I cannot stay silent any longer.

I attended the Veterans Affairs hearing on this bill on Thursday evening, I heard Senator Bob Gardner talk about the lack of "stakeholders" involved with this bill and for that he voted NO. If the police serve the people in their communities, then aren't WE, the citizens, the stakeholders? Not unions or other enforcement agencies? I don't know why in 2020 after all Black Americans have been through, why would anyone vote no to holding the bad cops accountable? I ask please that you vote YES on SB217 so we the citizens of CO can slowly trust those who are sworn to serve and protect us. Please vote YES. See you tomorrow at the hearing. You have the opportunity to make a difference! Thank you for your time.

In justice for ALL,  
Melanie Rose Rodgers