

Statement of Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, and Criminal Justice Organizations on Federal Divestment from Policing

June 10, 2020

In the wake of continued and senseless police killings of Black and Brown people, the undersigned civil rights, civil liberties, and criminal justice organizations urge federal lawmakers to take meaningful action to end the racist policing systems in our country. We ask Congress to both acknowledge that status quo policing cannot continue and recognize how federal resources play a significant role in maintaining this status quo. Federal funding is currently used to militarize police, put police in schools, advance the failed drug war, and criminalize poverty and substance use.

Therefore, we call upon Congress to end the Department of Defense 1033 program, a program that transfers militarized equipment to police departments and that has made police “at war” with their communities. We call upon Congress to end Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, which are used for little more than hiring police for streets and schools. We also call upon Congress to reexamine and redirect Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (Byrne JAG) and other federal grants that currently fund our failed criminal legal system. These dollars can instead be used to transform public safety, including through funding non-police first responder programs, alternatives to policing, and critical investments in public defense, reentry, harm reduction and the other non-carceral programs, services, and infrastructure that our communities desperately need – and that are most effective at keeping people safe.

Federal resources that continue to perpetuate police violence and harm against Black and Brown communities must end. Congress must reinvest those dollars into resources that end systemic racism, inequality, and disparities in Black and Brown communities. Congress must invest in true health and safety in communities that have for too long been harmed by the status quo.

American Civil Liberties Union
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Center for Popular Democracy
CLASP
Color of Change
Civil Rights Corps
Drug Policy Alliance
The Justice Collaborative
Justice Roundtable
The Sentencing Project