

HOLD POLICE ACCOUNTABLE

The tragic murders of Marcus-David Peters, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and the recent protests across the state and the country, show an urgent need for fundamental change in policing. Small reforms aren't enough – we must reimagine and transform the role of police in our society and invest in prevention over punishment. We can start by holding police officers, and the departments that employ them, accountable for harm caused by their unconstitutional conduct.

BREAK THE CYCLE OF REHIRING

THE PROBLEM

In Virginia, there are only a handful of ways for a police officer to lose the state certification, which gives them a license to work in law enforcement. They have to be charged and convicted of a felony or certain misdemeanors, fail a drug test, or fail to do their mandatory training. **Officers can be fired or asked to resign for a variety of reasons like any other profession, but that is only a temporary way of removing a bad cop from the street. These rogue officers are too often hired by another police department.**

THE SOLUTION

We must break the cycle of firing and rehiring officers. We need statewide standards that allow a license to police to be suspended or revoked for misconduct on the job, whether criminal or not. Other state licensed professionals – like teachers, barbers, lawyers and doctors – have statewide standards of conduct and risk losing their ability to practice for violating those standards. The same should be true for police.

WHAT LAWMAKERS CAN DO

Set strong, uniform statewide conduct standards that apply to all police and protect all communities. Champion a law that would decertify officers for serious misconduct and prevent them from being rehired at another Virginia police or sheriff's department. Until law enforcement officers face the potential end of their careers for misconduct, they will continue to act as if they are invulnerable.

FACT

Nationwide, about 30,000 cops have been decertified and are no longer able to get a job in law enforcement.

Virginia has contributed only 33 officers to that list – less than 1%.

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ALLOW PEOPLE TO SUE POLICE

THE PROBLEM

If you're hurt or killed by a police officer who has used excessive force in violation of the federal constitution, current law, known as "qualified immunity," limits the likelihood that you or your family can recover money damages for the harm caused by a police officer. **Qualified immunity gives law enforcement officers a shield from ever being held accountable in federal court to pay for the harm caused by their unconstitutional conduct.**

THE SOLUTION

Virginia law should authorize people in Virginia to bring lawsuits in state court to recover damages when they're hurt by police violence. Real harm done to an individual deserves real compensation. If people in Virginia are going to be able to hold police and their departments accountable to pay damages for the harm caused by the use of excessive force or other unconstitutional conduct, the Virginia General Assembly must pass a law allowing people to sue police in Virginia courts under Virginia laws.

WHAT LAWMAKERS CAN DO

Pass a law that will create a way for people in Virginia to sue police for the harms caused by police violence. The law must make clear that "qualified immunity" is not a defense to state lawsuits, so police no longer have this legal shield to hide behind. The constitutional rights of people in Virginia and the responsibilities of Virginia law enforcement should be decided in Virginia courts, by Virginia juries, with Virginia judges.

Virginia law enforcement should be held accountable in Virginia courts, by Virginia juries, with Virginia judges.