



POLICE OFFICERS FEDERATION OF MINNEAPOLIS

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

June 16, 2023

Many media outlets have been requesting a statement starting last night. It would have been irresponsible to comment on something without knowing the content of the report. We received this report around 11:00 today, I have been working through the day to read the report, answer my members questions, answer the incessant phone calls, and draft a response.

Today the United States Department of Justice released its report summarizing the findings of its two-year investigation of the Minneapolis Police Department. The report recognizes the stark economic disparities in Minneapolis between white people and people of color and the historical discrimination that in great part caused these disparities. The report also recognizes the emotional and psychological toll that policing imposes on people who serve in law enforcement and how that impact has contributed to the fact that today there are 300 fewer officers in the MPD than there were just three years ago.

The report goes on to basically ignore those important factors and instead condemns an entire agency and its employees based on anecdotes that were presented with a lack of context – such as the number of encounters that were found to be problematic relative the number of the same type of encounters that were handled appropriately; or whether the accused officers were disciplined or whether they are even still working for MPD. In some instances, the report presents incidents in a misleading light such as repeating allegations that were rejected by neutral arbitrators. Rather than engage in a point by point analysis, suffice to say that it is hard to imagine that a two-year long investigation of thousands of actions by the people of ANY organization the size of MPD would not uncover several mistakes of varying levels of severity.

These criticisms aside, the report will merely be used by those who are inclined to have an anti-police bias to justify their beliefs while those who are more pro-police will question the report's findings. As with most things, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Over the years, there have been exponentially more instances of heroic and selfless acts performed by dedicated officers in harrowing circumstances than those described in the report.

Clearly, we can always strive to be better, to try to minimize our mistakes, and when mistakes occur to take appropriate measures toward accountability and prevention to avoid repeating them. We can use the DOJ report, not to further divide our community in the unhealthy “us versus them” debate, but rather to move toward more trust and respect by the community towards its officers and by the officers toward the public they serve:

1. Recognize that study after study has demonstrated that the most significant factor that correlates to the likelihood of interactions with the police – whether as a perpetrator or a victim of crime – is **NOT** race, it is *poverty*. “Reforming the police” will have little

societal impact so long as we continue to ignore the disparities that exist in Minneapolis and their root causes, none of which have anything to do with the police.

2. Many of the remedial measures offered by the DOJ mirror actions the Federation has recommended in some form or another over the years. Contrary to common belief, the Federation is not nor has it ever been an impediment to improvement. If we want to achieve change, all stakeholders – including police officers, should be included and engaged in the conversations. Regardless of the profession or organization, when a “cultural change” is sought, it is nearly impossible to achieve unless a significant majority of the work force is engaged and supportive of the changes.
3. The DOJ report acknowledges the staffing crisis that plagues MPD and its ability to serve the community. One of the factors that should be considered as to *every* proposed “reform” is whether the reform will improve or hurt further efforts to attract and retain police officers. We are not saying that this should be the only factor, but failing to consider the impact on staffing would be grossly negligent.

The issues identified in this report can't be shouldered by the police officers alone. It will require the elected officials to provide the support and resources to do the work. It will require immense work in the community to build trust and it will require department leadership to be leaders.

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