TO THE AFL-CIO:

We are a group of civil rights organizations, elected officials, faith leaders, academics, public defenders, and community-based organizers who believe in the power of unions, and who recognize the history that unions have given power to people in our communities who are often powerless. However, that proud history is being destroyed by the legacy that police unions are leaving behind, and we ask you to stop allowing the International Union of Police Associations (IUPA) and other law enforcement affiliates including prison guard unions to use the protections the AFL-CIO provides under your power and leadership.

We ask you to disassociate the IUPA from the AFL-CIO.

We further ask that all other AFL-CIO unions establish a policy to not include police or other law enforcement, including immigration-related officers, in their membership.

For too long, police unions have used the contract negotiation process to enact measures that shield police from accountability at the expense of public safety, to grow their budget for their self-interest rather than the interest of the community, and to impede necessary change by attacking progressives—including the broader labor movement—who have been at the forefront of criminal justice reform.

The killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and Tony McDade are just the latest signs of the all-too-apparent crisis in policing in America. But it would be a continued mistake to question the structure of policing—as we are now—but then to say that the profession as it exists now may be reformed. We’ve made that mistake before. We can no longer tinker around the edges of this issue.

Eric Garner. Michael Brown. Laquan McDonald. Sandra Bland. Jessica Williams. These police killings six years ago sparked protests across the country and birthed the Black Lives Matter movement and a flood of reform efforts. Six years later, though, we see that nothing has changed.

The solutions we need right now both to protect our safety and to rescue our democracy are ones that meet the scale of the problem. To respond to George Floyd’s death, or Breonna Taylor’s death, we must replace the questions about how to reform policing with questions about what a broader vision for safety and justice in America should look like and what role policing should play in it. However, as long as police unions can hide behind the shield that the AFL-CIO provides, no real action can be taken that will move our country forward.

In the past few years, we have seen a wave of criminal justice reforms sweeping the country. There is a growing recognition that mass incarceration hurts the powerless the most- whether it’s holding someone in jail because they can’t afford to pay their bail, demanding a high fine or fee to pay for a diversion program, or violating someone on probation because they missed an appointment due to childcare. And this growing recognition includes Richard Trunka, the president of AFL-CIO, who acknowledged during a speech on criminal justice reform that this nation, under the guise of public
safety, spends billions making our country less safe by selectively locking people up and sealing people out and shut entire communities down by creating a permanent criminal class. He also committed: “I made a promise to myself that I would do everything in my power to help change this tragic reality.”

But as advocates in cities and counties across the country -- including your leader -- have fought to equalize the playing field, the one voice that obstructed reform -- through vicious attacks and fear mongering tactics -- has been the police unions. The AFL-CIO cannot stand for criminal justice reform, while at the same time allowing police unions to use your power to impede reform.

In contract negotiations across the country, unions have fought again and again to prevent accountability measures from being put in place such as civilian review boards and making discipline records transparent. The unions impede this needed reform by claiming that accountability will interfere with policing, and making the false claim that somehow accountability is at odds with public safety when, in fact, the opposite is true. Derek Chauvin, the officer charged with murdering George Floyd, had 18 prior complaints filed with Minneapolis Police Department’s Internal Affairs, while his accomplice Tou Thao was the subject of six complaints. It was union protection that allowed them to remain armed, dangerous, and a threat to public safety. The AFL-CIO should not be complicit in shielding their members from accountability. These unions dishonor the labor movement.

Police unions have a long history of maintaining their power by exploiting fears and promoting the myth that more police equals less crime. This is the rhetoric used to push back from budget cuts that could mean more money to spend on housing, education, mental health treatment, or other services that can make communities safer while improving life outcomes for all. This is funding that is either taken from, or not available to, other union members who work for the government.

Across the country, people are working to change the landscape of law enforcement by common sense reforms that increase public safety such as sending experts in mental health and substance abuse to treat people instead of police and using community based violence interrupters to prevent gun violence. However, when the police union uses the AFL-CIO to stand in the way of reform by unnecessarily advocating for increased police spending, we all lose.

We respect the need for unions to protect people’s rights in the workplace, but we also agree with President Trumka that criminal justice reform is a labor issue. If AFL-CIO wants to prove its commitment to racial justice, worker solidarity, and meaningful reform, then AFL-CIO must permanently disaffiliate from the IUPA and sever its ties with any and all other police associations. It must also ask all unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO to establish a policy preventing police officers from joining other affiliate unions.
LINDSAY N. SABADOSA
1st Hampshire District State Representative
Massachusetts House of Representatives

REV. JAY LEACH
Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte

CHAS MOORE
Executive Director
Austin Justice Coalition

KARMA LEKSHI TSOMO
Professor
University of San Diego

REV. DR. MARVIN M. ELLISON
Religious Coalition Against Discrimination

MARK SMITH
Helena Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis
Princeton Theological Seminary

JOANNE D’ARCANGELO
Owner
JDA Consulting, Inc.

ALEX BUNIN
Chief Public Defender
Harris County Public Defender’s Office

ANNE UNDERWOOD
Mediator/Lawyer/Ethics Counsel

MICHAEL YOUNG
Chief Public Defender
Bexar County Public Defender’s Office

GREGORY R. JARRELL
Co-Founder
QC Family Tree

EVE STEVENS
Minister
Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte

MEREDITH JORDAN
Founder and Facilitator
The Living Spiritual Elders Project

ALEX ROAN
Founder
MaineTransNet (Marine Transgender Network)

SUSAN TALVE
Co-Founder
Central Reform Congregation

HUSSEIN RASHID
Adjunct Faculty
Columbia University, Department of Religion

ZAYN KASSAM
John Knox McLean Professor of Religious Studies
Pomona College, Claremont, California

LEE KOVARSKY
Professor of Law
University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

RUTH BUFFALO
District 27 State House Representative
North Dakota House of Representatives

CYRUS O’BRIEN
Postdoctoral Research Associate
Washington University in St. Louis

STEPHEN HARRER
Clinical Law Professor
Florida International University College of Law

CHARLES PRESS
Clinical Professor
University of Texas School of Law

ALEX S. VITALE
Coordinator
Policing and Social Justice Project, Brooklyn College

THEA POSEL
Professor of Law and Social Work
University of Texas School of Law

SHEENA JOHNSON
Professor
University of California Irvine

MARIE MAZZONE
Bend the Arc

KRISTINE CHONG
Chaplain

LEX STEPPING
Director of Campaigns and Policy
Dignity & Power Now

ALIZA B. KAPLAN
Professor
Lewis & Clark Law School

SHARMIN HOSSAIN
Digital Security Trainer
Equality Labs

DAVID HARRIS
Managing Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice
Harvard Law School

EMILY LANGOWITZ
Rabbi
Temple Solel

WAYNE SANDHOLTZ
John A. McCone Chair in International Relations and Professor of International Relations and Law
University of Southern California

ARIELA GROSS
John B. & Alice R. Sharp Professor of Law & History
University of Southern California Gould School of Law

KATHRYN DYER
Clinical Professor
University of Texas School of Law

ARMEN MERJANIAN
Attorney

EUNISSES HERNANDEZ
Executive Director
La Defensa

LISA SCHREIBERSDORF
Executive Director
Brooklyn Defender Services

MERCEDES MONTAGNES
Executive Director
Promise of Justice

JERRY ADER
Public Defender
Genesee County Public Defender, NY

NANCY HURLBERT
Chair
Lake County Democratic Party, FL

TIAWANA BROWN
Founder
Beauty after the Bars

KIM TAYLOR-THOMPSON
Professor of Clinical Law
New York University School of Law

CARRIE BLEAKLEY
Conflict Defender
Ontario County, NY

DEBORAH AHRENS
Associate Professor of Law
Seattle University School of Law

KAMERON D. JOHNSON
Juvenile Public Defender
Travis County Juvenile Public Defender’s Office, TX

DAVID LEE
President
Texas Signal

STEVEN GREENWALD, ESQ.
Chief Public Defender
Luzerne County Public Defender’s Office, PA

BREANNA DIAZ
Policy Director
Positive Women’s Network-USA

LUPA MARLENE BRANDT
Community Outreach Coordinator
TRANScending Barriers Atlanta

JONATHAN SIMON
Professor of Law
University of California Berkeley School of Law
SIGNED

DAVID JOHNS  
Executive Director  
National Black Justice Coalition

SUZANNE A. LUBAN  
Clinical Supervising Attorney and Lecturer in Law, Criminal Defense Clinic  
Stanford Law School

ZAKIYA SANKARA-JABAR  
Co-Founder  
Racial Justice NOW!

MOHAMMED MISSOURI  
Executive Director  
Jetpac (Justice Education Technology Political Advocacy Center)

ROB KAHN  
Professor of Law  
University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis

DAVID CAICEDO  
Florida Student Power Network Co-Director  
Organize Florida

AZIZ RANA  
Professor of Law  
Cornell Law School

CYNTHIA GODSOE  
Professor of Law  
Brooklyn Law School

RONALD TYLER  
Professor of Law  
Stanford Law School

STEPHANIE KOLLMANN  
Policy Director of the Children and Family Justice Center  
Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law

REVEREND JEN BAILEY  
Founder and Executive Director  
Faith Matters Network

LESLIE ROSE  
Professor Emerita  
Golden Gate University

IAN STRINGHAM  
Executive Director  
California Legal Research

HEATHER VARANINI  
Associate Director of Academic Achievement and Adjunct Professor  
Golden Gate University School of Law

ERIC MILLER  
Professor of Law and LeO J. O’Brien Fellow  
Loyola Law School at Loyola Marymount University

AMBROSIO SILVA  
Assistant Public Defender  
Travis County Juvenile Public Defender’s Office

TANYA M. WASHINGTON  
Professor of Law  
Georgia State University College of Law

ANNA LISE BUTH  
MR Bauer Fellow in Dispute Resolution at the Center on Negotiation and Mediation, Bluhm Legal Clinic  
Northwestern Pritzker School of Law

KATE MOGULESCU  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Law  
Brooklyn Law School

KAREN BAKER-FLETCHER  
Professor of Systematic Theology  
Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology

KATE D’ADAMO  
Partner  
Reframe Health and Justice

PATTY BERGER  
Local Organizer  
All of Us or None - St. Louis Chapter

TIM BLACK  
CAHOOTS Operations Coordinator  
White Bird Clinic

OLIVIA BENNETT  
District 13 Council Representative  
Allegheny County Council, PA

JOHANNA MUSTAFA  
Steering Committee Member  
Yalla Indivisible

BETHANY HALLAM  
At Large Council Representative  
Allegheny County Council, PA

REV. VALERIE MANSFIELD  
Senior Minister  
Unity of Louisville, Inc.

NORMAN SOLOMON  
Co-Founder and National Director  
RootsAction

CASSANDRA BENSANIH  
Senior Organizer  
Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement

ANGELA DAVIS  
Professor of Law  
American University’s Washington College of Law

MARY PAT TREUTHART  
Professor  
Gonzaga University School of Law

ISABELLE GUNNING  
Professor of Law  
Southwestern Law School

AMY JACKS DEAN  
Co-Pastor  
Park Road Baptist

RUSS DEAN  
Co-Pastor  
Park Road Baptist

BENJAMIN DAVIS  
Professor of Law  
University of Toledo College of Law

ANITA PRIZIO  
District 3 Council Representative  
Allegheny County Council, PA

ISSA KOHLER-HAUSMANN  
Professor of Law  
Yale Law School

MACARENA SAEZ  
Director of the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law  
American University Washington College of Law

MARTÍN QUEZADA  
State Senator  
District 29, AZ

MEDELLIN HUGO  
Catholic Priest, Reverend, Father

NICOLE MORRIS  
Professor in Practice  
Emory University School of Law

REBECCA HAMILTON  
Associate Professor of Law  
American University Washington College of Law

DONNA HYLTON  
Author of “A Little Piece Of Light”

NIKOLAS GUGGENBERGER  
Executive Director of the Yale Information Society Project  
Yale Law School

MARGARET BARRY  
Visiting Professor of Law  
American University Washington College of Law

JESSICA L. MILLWARD  
Practitioner-in-Residence  
American University Washington College of Law

MARITZA PEREZ  
Director of National Affairs  
Drug Policy Alliance

ADNAN ZULFIQAR  
Associate Professor of Law  
Rutgers Law School

MICHELE PHELPS  
Associate Professor of Sociology  
University of Minnesota

DAVID HUNTER  
Professor of Law  
American University Washington College of Law

SYLVIA LETT  
Assoc. Prof. of Legal Writing  
University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law
NADIA AHMAD
Associate Professor of Law
Barry University School of Law

ALICIA VIRANI
Criminal Justice Program
UCLA School of Law

NICK RATHOD
President
Virginia Peoples PAC

NANCY E. ALLISON
Pastor
United Church of Christ

IVETTE ALÉ
Senior Policy Lead
Coordinator of JusticeLA Coalition

DEANNA HOSKINS
President
JustLeadershipUSA

W. DAVID BALL
Associate Professor
Santa Clara University School of Law

LINDSAY JARRELL BLOUIN
Deputy Chief
Baton Rouge Office of the Public Defender, LA

ELLEN KREITZBERG
Professor of Law
Santa Clara University School of Law

DEIRDRE FULLER
Chief Public Defender
Rapides Parish Public Defender, LA

ANAND SUBRAMANIAN
Managing Director
PolicyLink

SAMANTHA BUCKINGHAM
Clinical Professor and Director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic
Loyola Law School at Loyola Marymount University

MONA LYNCH
Professor of Criminology, Law and Society and Law
University of California, Irvine

LYDIA KIVES
Senior Staff Attorney
The Bail Project

NIELS FRENZEN
Sydney and Audrey Irmas Endowed Clinical Professor of Law
University of Southern California Gould School of Law

CRAIG KONNOTH
Associate Professor Law
University of Colorado School of Law

BRIAN GARCIA
Vice President
Tempe Union High School District

FAWN WALKER-MONTGOMERY
Co-Founder and Executive Director
Take Action Mon Valley

COLLEEN SHANAHAN
Associate Clinical Professor of Law
Columbia Law School

TRISHA WARD
13th Judicial District Public Defender

RANJANA NATARAJAN
Clinical Professor
University of Texas School of Law

ALTHEA SPENCER MILLER
Professor
Drew Theological School

BENNETT CAPERS
Professor of Law and Director of the Center of Race, Law, and Justice
Fordham University School of Law

SUE UDRY
Executive Director
Defending Rights & Dissent

JESSICA DIXON WEAVER
Associate Professor
Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law

JOSEPH PILERI
Practitioner in Residence
American University Washington College of Law

VINCENT SOUTHERLAND
Executive Director of the Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law
New York University School of Law

JOSEPH PILERI
Vice Mayor
City of Cleveland Heights, OH

CHASE FOSTER
Rabbi for Engagement and Learning jHUB

JANET F. KORN
Sister of Mercy
Sisters of Mercy Community of New York Pennsylvania West

VALERIE TRAUB
Adrienne Rich Distinguished Professor of English & Women’s Studies and Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of English and Women’s Studies
University of Michigan

ALVIN BRAGG
Visiting Professor and Co-Director of the Racial Justice Project
New York Law School

MARYANN SCALI
Executive Director
National Juvenile Defender Center

MAGGIE LEBLANC
District Defender of 16th Judicial District Public Defenders’ Office, LA

IBRAHEEM S. SAMIRAH
86th District Delegate Member
Virginia House of Delegates

DAN SIMON
Professor of Law & Psychology
University of Southern California

TAMAR BIRCKHEAD
Attorney

SONG RICHARDSON
Dean
University of California Irvine School of Law

EMILIE TOWNES
Dean
Vanderbilt University Divinity School

JODY ARMOUR
Professor
City University of New York School of Law

STEVEN ZEIDMAN
Professor
University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law

CLAUDIA MUNOZ
Interim Executive Co-Director
Grassroots Leadership

MARIE PREYER GENTRY
IA Executive Director
42nd Judicial District Public Defender

CLAIRE HOEY
Assistant Professor
University of Southern California School of Law

MICHAELA BRENNER
Professor of Law
University of Pennsylvania School of Law

SARA JACOBSON
Associate Professor of Law
Temple University School of Law

EMILY KELLER
Clinical Professor
University of Pennsylvania School of Law
ROSEMARY B. MCNATT  
President  
Starr King School for the Ministry

CHARLES S. BOBIS  
Professor of Law (Ret.)  
St. John’s University School of Law

MICHELLE OBERMAN  
Katharine and George Alexander  
Professor of Law  
Santa Clara University School of Law

LESLIE CREDELE  
Founder and Director  
Justice For Housing

MICHAEL HARRIS  
Pastor

KEVIN BIRD  
President  
Michigan State University Graduate  
Employees Union - AFT Local 6196

COLLEEN CHIEN  
Professor  
Santa Clara University School of Law

MIKE SYLVESTER  
District 39 State Representative  
Maine House of Representatives

EMILY SHETTY  
District 18 Delegate  
Maryland House of Delegates

KATHRYN RUSSELL-BROWN  
Professor, Levin, Mabie, and Levin  
Professor and Director for the  
Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations  
University of Florida Levin College of Law

TSEMING YANG  
Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Global Law and Policy  
Santa Clara University School of Law

THEA SEBASTIAN  
Policy Counsel  
Civil Rights Corps

KATHLEEN KIM  
Professor of Law  
Loyola Law School at Loyola  
Marymount University

MARK MCLAUGHLIN  
President  
Computer Forensics International

LIYAH BROWN  
Director of Criminal Injustice Reform  
Texas Civil Rights Project

EZAK PEREZ  
Director of Programs  
Gender Justice LA

JEFF HOROWITZ  
Professor  
University of Michigan

DWAYNE KWASYEE WRIGHT  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
George Washington University

LAURA RILEY  
Director of Experiential Learning  
USC Gould School of Law

BINNY MILLER  
Professor of Law and Co-Director, Criminal Justice Clinic  
American University Washington College of Law

DANIEL MEDWED  
University Distinguished Professor  
Northeastern University

TABITHA ST. BERNARD-JACOBS  
Women’s March

BRENDON WOODS  
Public Defender  
Alameda County Public Defenders Office

AMANDA WOOG  
Executive Director  
Texas Fair Defense Project

RUSSELL GABRIEL  
Clinical Professor  
University of Georgia Law School

KATIE KRONICK  
Practitioner in Residence  
American University Washington College of Law

JAMES MACLEOD  
Assistant Professor  
Brooklyn Law School

SHIRLEY LIN  
Acting Assistant Professor  
New York University School of Law

PATRISSE CULLORS  
Political strategist, Co-founder of Black Lives Matter & Founder of Reform LA Jails

ZACH NORRIS  
Executive Director  
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

SIGNED

*institutional affiliation listed for identification purposes only