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DENVER JUSTICE PROJECT DEMANDS STRONGER COMMUNITY & OIM INVOLVEMENT IN DPD'S DRAFT USE OF FORCE POLICY, CALLS FOR SIX SPECIFIC CHANGES TO BE MADE

DENVER — The Denver Justice Project (DJP) joins other community groups in calling for an overhaul of the community input process for the Denver Police Department's new use of force policy to include not only the voices of Denver residents and the victims of police violence, but also the involvement of Denver's Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM), which Chief White should have brought to the table at the beginning of the revisions. DJP urges the city to create additional community input forums so that residents of areas with high rates of police-community interactions like the far Northeast and Southwest Denver can have the opportunity to have a say in this critical police policy. In addition, DJP encourages Denver residents concerned about police reform to advocate in the planned forums, not only for a broader community engagement process on the policy's revision, but that Denver Police Chief Robert White revise his draft of the use of force policy so that it will:

1. Explicitly require officers to attempt or exhaust all other remaining, less severe alternatives before resorting to using deadly force;
2. Expressly prohibit the use force on a civilian as punishment of any kind;
3. Specifically require officers to attempt to provide life-saving first aid to people they have shot or seriously injured on the scene at the earliest possible time;
4. Offer a definition that average people could understand about what is to be considered "reasonable" in the policy's requirement that officers use force that is "reasonable and necessary."
5. Require comprehensive reporting on all incidents where officers use force, including threats of deadly force (for example, reporting instances where an officer threatens a civilian with a firearm) on pain of formal discipline;
6. Include an official Use of Force Continuum or Matrix that defines/limits the types of force and/or weapons that can be used to respond to specific types of resistance.

There are many positive things in Chief White's draft policy that reform advocates can appreciate, including what we call the "Paul Castaway Rule" that prohibits the use of deadly force against anyone who poses a danger only to themselves, and the "Ronquillo-Hernandez Rule" that prohibits officers from firing into moving vehicles. But DJP feels that the above additions to the draft use of force policy are indispensable for establishing the high levels of safety, restraint, and accountability that Denver expects from its police, and they come with the expectation that the Chief will make a good faith effort to incorporate additional suggestions from the community that are offered during the upcoming community input forums on the new use of force policy. After his initial refusal to accept any kind of input beyond a short window for untransparent email feedback, accepting this input would provided a needed demonstration to the public that Chief White is committed to operating the police department in real partnership with our community and with those who have been impacted by police abuse in mind.

In addition the Chief's acceptance of this kind of input is a clear mandate from last November's election in which an overwhelming majority of Denver voters supported referred amendment 2B. Amendment 2B was a measure sponsored by DJP and other community groups to put the OIM into the city charter, in order to protect its continued existence. The measure's landslide 76% to 24% victory clearly showed that

the people of Denver believe strongly in the need for independent civilian oversight of our law enforcement agencies, and the Chief must not ignore this obvious signal of the community's desire for input on how policing works in Denver. In addition, as the decision not to punish the officers who murdered 17 year old Jessica Hernandez sparks a new wave of outrage around the city - an incident which directly influenced the DPD to change its policy on shooting into moving vehicles - the need for the community to have a say in how and when police can use force against our friends and families has never been higher.

One of the primary responsibilities of the OIM is to make recommendations regarding policy changes in the Denver Police Department (DPD). When Police Chief White announced plans to revise DPD's use of force policy, the OIM specifically asked to be involved in that process. Yet Chief White refused to allow the Independent Monitor (IM) to participate in the process, and finally shared the new draft with the OIM only hours before it was released to the general public. This comes after the Denver Sheriff Department (DSD) set a much better example of building community trust by spending a year revising its use of force policy with full participation of the OIM and several community representatives. Chief White not only flouted the clear will of Denver voters for increased independent oversight by the OIM, but allowed no participation by community groups—those who will be most affected by the proposed changes in the use of force policy—in the process.

President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing report Recommendation 2.1 states that "Law enforcement agencies should collaborate with community members to develop policies and strategies in communities and neighborhoods disproportionately affected by crime by deploying resources that aim to reduce crime through improving relationships, greater community engagement, and cooperation." Chief White's initial approach flew in the face of this national best practice - and indeed of common sense - and missed a chance to develop policies that Denverites feel ownership over and build trust in our police.

Under pressure from the public, Chief White has now reluctantly agreed to hold three community meetings to receive "feedback" on the developing use of force policy, but the damage has already been done, and community distrust of DPD and the Chief's intentions will only increase if White does not reconsider his rejection of city-wide input. We believe that a step toward repairing this harm is to restart this community input process with Denver residents and their representative, Independent Monitor Nick Mitchell, at the table for all future discussions of this policy.

DJP urges community members to attend these meetings, both to offer their opinions on when and how police should be allowed to use force against our family, friends, and community members, and to voice their feelings about the way this policy was developed without community and OIM participation. The meeting dates and locations are:

- January 24th, 5-8 pm, Boys and Girls club of Metro Denver, 3333 Holly;
- January 28th, 9am-12pm, Elevate Denver Church, 2205 W. 30th Ave;
- February 4th, 10am-1pm, Red Shield Community Centre, 2915 High St.

DPD's mission is to "protect and serve" the people of Denver. It cannot fulfill that mission without the trust, the confidence and the faith of those people in the department. The Independent Monitor will soon be issuing a critique of the proposed policy, as will DJP. But whatever the good and bad points of the policy, the process by which it was developed is just as important as the policy itself. DJP is demanding that any future policy revisions must include, from the first day of the process, the participation of the OIM and of representatives of community organizations representing those most affected by DPD policies.

The Denver Justice Project is a coalition effort created to empower communities impacted by oppression with the mission of transforming the nature of policing and the structure of the criminal justice system through intersectional movement building, direct action, policy advocacy, and collaborative education.