

MASSACHUSETTS MUNICIPAL LEADERS

Pledge, Principles, and Actions on Systemic Racism in Our Communities and Violence in Law Enforcement

We, the undersigned mayors and managers from cities and towns throughout Metropolitan Boston, pledge to address systemic racism in our communities and violence in law enforcement.

After the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and many other people of color who have lost their lives or have been injured as a result of police brutality, our residents are demanding significant changes in the way policing is conducted. We hear them and we are listening. Though our cities and towns differ, all of our residents deserve to feel safe in their homes and on our streets, and now is the time to make these changes a reality in our communities.

PRINCIPLES

As we continue to engage in community conversations and learn more from our Black and Brown residents, the following principles will guide our efforts:

1. We agree that systemic racism is a public health emergency, which must be addressed by strong and decisive actions over the coming weeks and months, and by patient and determined efforts years into the future. We are in this now; we are in it for the long haul.
2. We acknowledge that racial biases and inequities exist, and we are committed to achieving racial equity and identifying disparities in local municipal services, education, health, housing, transportation, jobs, law enforcement, and youth programming, among others. We are committed to providing safe spaces for community input and dialogue around these issues and we will continue to work together to share best practices and to make progress at the local, state, and federal levels.
3. We are committed to instituting an anti-violence approach to policing that prioritizes the safety, health, and well being of all community members, including police officers, as its primary goal. Policing practices that seek to de-escalate conflict, minimize the use of force, avoid false arrest, and establish trust with all residents, especially communities of color, will inform decisions on recruitment, training, promotion, equipment, and tactics.
4. We will work to address racism within law enforcement in a proactive, intentional, and consistent manner.
5. We will make it a priority to take action now as local governments, and we will also advocate for state and federal policies and funding to enable cities and towns to accomplish the goals of this pledge.

DEMANDING CHANGES IN STATE OVERSIGHT

In order to create a consistent approach to anti-violence and anti-racist policing across the Commonwealth, we must advance legislation that will make these changes possible. We support the following legislative efforts:

1. The civil service recruitment system is a barrier to forming police forces committed to anti-violence. The use of a single exam to provide a list of potential police recruits is not sufficient to properly vet candidates. We must work together with the Governor and the Legislature to create a more robust and holistic system of recruitment for our departments. We will also pursue legislation that allows any community to leave the civil service system by a simple majority vote of their Town Meeting or City Council, and that ensures leaving the civil service system is not considered a working condition change that triggers renegotiation of collective bargaining agreements.
2. The current arbitration and bargaining policies and processes that dictate the way our departments deal with poor officer performance, and especially the inappropriate use of force, make it very hard to address police misconduct. Current arbitration and bargaining procedures mean that officers who are repeatedly cited for violent, biased, inappropriate, or racist behavior can remain in office. This needs to change. Since it will likely require legislation, we will pursue legislative strategies that give cities and towns the flexibility to quickly and effectively address misconduct by police officers. These could include changes to the finding of fact, arbitrator selection, and the opportunity for an arbitrator to substitute judgment.
3. The state and federal government should provide cities and towns with funding for anti-racism training and education programs for members of the municipal workforces. Within police departments, this means cities and towns must have the ability to provide ongoing training police officers on implicit bias, racial equity, and non-violent approaches to law enforcement. Some communities have the financial flexibility to reallocate existing funding for training, but that is not true in every community in the Commonwealth, and we must make sure that every community can afford these critical investments for law enforcement agencies, and for other municipal employees.
4. We support the passage of legislation endorsed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus:
 - a. Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST): Create a POST system to certify police officers and enable de-certification for misconduct or abuse.
 - b. Civil Service Exam Review and Oversight: Establish an Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity that will create guidelines and review diversity plans for all state agencies; establish a Peace Officer Exam Advisory Board to review examinations for appointment and promotion of peace officers.

- c. Commission on Structural Racism: Create a commission to study how the systemic presence of institutional racism has created a culture of structural racial inequality, which has exacerbated disproportionate minority contact with the criminal justice system in Massachusetts. The Commission must include people from diverse races, and represent all parts of the Commonwealth.
 - d. Adopt clear statutory limits on police use of force, including choke-holds and other tactics known to have deadly consequences. Require independent investigation of officer-related deaths, and require data collection and reporting on race, regarding all arrests and police use of force by every department.
5. Create an independent authority to investigate and prosecute the use of force by officers in all cases that result in emergency medical care, hospitalization, or the death of a civilian. This independent body would have the authority to determine whether the use of force was justified consistent with state law and would have the power to prosecute cases where such force was not deemed necessary.

ACTING LOCALLY TO MAKE CHANGE

To start placing the principles of anti-violence and anti-racism at the heart of our police departments' work, we will also work to implement local policies and actions. These have been informed by what is outlined in the #8Can'tWait and Campaign Zero platforms and by our own conversations. Some of the undersigned communities have already adopted these or similar policies. For those of us that have not, we will consider those policies that will work in our communities and maintain ongoing conversations with our residents, and where appropriate, our local legislative bodies.

1. Declare that racism is a public health crisis and worthy of treatment, assessment, and financial investment in order to eradicate negative impacts.
2. Ensure that the community has a Commission that focuses on Race, Equity, and Inclusion to help us address racism in all aspects of our communities.
3. Require the adoption of a use of force continuum of practice by our departments.
4. Require officers to de-escalate all interactions to prevent violence or the use of force.
5. Require officers to exhaust all alternatives before force is used.
6. Require officers to give sufficient warning before force is threatened, applied, or firearms are used.
7. Apply a "duty to intervene" on all officers if they see force being threatened or applied prematurely or inappropriately.

8. Ban the use of any chokeholds and strangleholds and develop explicit and effective alternatives with a lower likelihood of injury or death.
9. Ban shooting at or from a moving vehicle or within crowds.
10. Require comprehensive public reporting of incidents where force is applied
11. Adopt policies to address poor performance and inappropriate uses of force by officers quickly and effectively, while we also seek statutory changes that will strengthen the impact of these policies.
12. Review our police budgets and assess whether allocations might be better deployed either within police departments or for other critical community programs.
13. Re-evaluate whether responsibilities that are currently performed by police officers could be provided in new and different ways or by non-police personnel.
14. Discuss and explore the possibility of establishing meaningful and effective Civilian Review Boards.
15. Redouble our efforts to hire and retain more people of color within our police departments, with an emphasis on diversifying both the officer corps and the command structure, while recognizing that some of the constraints placed on local government by state law must be changed.
16. Enact policies and practices that enable protests that are free from violence and the fear of violence by any party.
17. Make data on use of force and other key data available to the public on a regular basis.
18. Examine crowd control tactics during protests so they do not contribute to confrontation and place police officers and members of the community at risk of harm. This includes assessing the practices of regional emergency response teams that are supported through mutual aid to gauge whether they comport with our commitment to anti-violence.

SIGNATORIES

Adam Chapdelaine
Town Manager of Arlington

Michael D. Herbert
Town Manager of Ashland

Michael P. Cahill
Mayor of Beverly

Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager of Cambridge

Sumbul Siddiqui
Mayor of Cambridge

Thomas G. Ambrosino
City Manager of Chelsea

Dr. Yvonne M. Spicer
Mayor of Framingham

Alex Morse
Mayor of Holyoke

Breanna Lungo-Koehn
Mayor of Medford

Paul Brodeur
Mayor of Melrose

Andrew Sheehan
Town Administrator of Middleton

Elizabeth Gibson
Town Manager of Nantucket

Donna Holaday
Mayor of Newburyport

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor of Newton

Brian M. Arrigo
Mayor of Revere

Kimberley Driscoll
Mayor of Salem

Joseph A. Curtatone
Mayor of Somerville

Sean Fitzgerald
Town Manager of Swampscott

Austin Faison
Town Manager of Winthrop