

Testimony in favor of Item #20-2867 – Justice for Black Lives Resolution

Cook County Board of Commissioners Criminal Justice Committee Meeting

Monday, July 27th 3:30pm

On behalf of Love & Protect, an organization that supports women and gender non-conforming/non-binary people of color who are criminalized or harmed by state and interpersonal violence, we submit this testimony in support of Resolution 20-2867, the Justice for Black Lives resolution. We implore the Cook County Board to pass this resolution and fully implement it by defunding the Cook County Department of Corrections and Sheriff's police and investing in community-based services that make our communities safer, reduce violence and address harm.

Survivors of intimate partner violence are often charged with criminal offenses and incarcerated for actions taken in defense of their own or their children's lives or physical well-being. Survivors also are charged with crimes committed by their abusers. Survivors face impossible choices in the face of extreme coercive control and life-shattering violence. Police and pretrial detention replicate that violence: they impose complete control over the survivor, separating them from children, family, and friends, and commonly engage in re-traumatizing verbal and physical abuse.

Policing has been an abysmal failure in preventing or addressing the harm of abuse. Abusers' violence could be far better addressed through community services designed to work towards reducing toxic behavior and addressing needs. As Danielle Sered (*Until We Reckon*) notes, violence is rooted in shame, isolation, past experiences of violence, and not having one's basic needs met. Jailing people who have survived violence does nothing to enhance community safety. Jailing abusers has not made families safer and only exacerbates the violence. Alleviating poverty and investing in services that heal and strengthen communities will do far more to stem violence than policing ever can.

Funding basic needs – affordable housing, living-wage jobs, childcare, medical and mental health care, and quality education – reduces interpersonal violence. Funding community-based restorative practices that address conflict would reduce violence in the community and end the cycle of intergenerational harm that jailing inflicts on communities of color.

We urgently ask the Board of Commissioners to pass Resolution 20-2867 and to implement it by funding services and initiatives that are life-affirming and not based in coercive control and state violence. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Signed,
Briana Hanny
Member of Love & Protect
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