

September 9, 2014

Dear Community Member,

Across the City, an alarmingly high number of Baltimore residents – predominantly of color – are living in constant fear of the very system entrusted to ensure their safety and well-being. Time and time again, the Baltimore Police Department has continued to harass, subjugate and brutalize Black and Latino men, women and children without consequence or accountability. As a community we join today in solidarity to say: Enough is enough.

In light of ongoing incidents of violence and brutality inflicted by Baltimore law enforcement against innocent, unarmed civilians like Tyrone West, Abdul-Jaami Salaam and countless others, a group of local activists and advocates for racial and social justice have come together to form the West Family Coalition, forging a united front aimed at advancing legislation to safeguard citizens of Baltimore -- and the state of Maryland -- from police violence. The overarching goal of the West Family Coalition is to push for the installation of greater systems of transparency and accountability within the Baltimore Police Department, and to bring urgent national attention to the rampant abuses of power happening right here in our backyard.

As a first order of business, we, the undersigned, call on our legislative leaders to pursue the following urgent actions:

1. Institute mandatory body cameras worn by all on-duty police officers in Baltimore City (Should be implemented with all footage being public information, and a 30-day due process phase, allowing any civilian to refuse release of the footage they are in).
2. Enact the Officer Friendly Initiative to increase positive police-community interaction by requiring the police to volunteer in youth programs in the neighborhoods they police, attend community events, and live a certain amount of miles near the city they police for a minimum of 5 years.
3. Implement necessary revisions to the “Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights”
4. Grant the Civilian Review Board power to make administrative decisions concerning police-involved deaths and those involving use of deadly force.
5. Afford Grand Jury access for incidents involving police use of deadly force.
6. Establish an Independent Review Board comprised of experts chosen by family members of the decedent who are independent of city and state government and based on individual cases.

7. Exercise federal oversight (DOJ/ FBI or both) of use of deadly force and in custody death investigations with Internal Affairs playing a subordinate role in securing information and conducting interviews with witnesses and officers.

In consideration of the above, the West Family Coalition invites all those who are committed to empowering communities against police brutality to join our movement for change by signing on in endorsement of these proposed actions. Further, we call upon local, state and national leadership to take our recommendations under serious consideration and agree to meet with members of the coalition to discuss concrete solutions for redressing and rebuilding police-community relations.

The time to act is now. Please support our efforts to eradicate state-sanctioned violence and racially-discriminant law enforcement policies by joining our coalition and urging family, friends, colleagues and neighbors to do the same. Together we can leverage the great power in numbers to protect our communities against violence and injustice.

Sincerely,

*The West Family Coalition*

(Families of Tyrone West and Abdul-Jaami Salaam; National Action Network; United Youth Council)