



March 24, 2021

TO: The Honorable Brian P. Kemp, Governor
The Honorable David Ralston, Speaker of the House
Distinguished Members of the House Committee on Motor Vehicles
Members, Georgia House of Representatives
FROM: The Undersigned Coalition of 34 Organizations
SUBJECT: Oppose SB 115

Mr. Governor, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House,

We the undersigned organizations urge you to oppose SB 115.

The death of George Floyd at the hands of police last year was a wake-up call for many Americans about the multitude of problems inherent in our modern-day policing system, but it was déjà vu for Americans of color and especially Black Americans. Mr. Floyd's killing was also a reminder that past efforts to address problems with policing have failed repeatedly. It is against the backdrop of these realities, and more, that we are deeply troubled by the provisions in Senate Bill 115. If public safety is the goal, then the legislature must not pass Senate Bill 115.

Senate Bill 115 creates a new instructional course designed to educate drivers on how to behave when interacting with law enforcement officers. The bill's emphasis on the behavior of drivers and the onus it places on ordinary civilians of Georgia to protect their own safety, shifts responsibility away from where it should lie, which is with the police. Another incredibly troubling provision of this bill is the fact that the training course will be designed by and possibly given by law enforcement officers. There is a longstanding adversarial relationship between police and the communities they serve, especially communities of color, and a training course for civilians being designed and potentially administered by the very people who have contributed to the brokenness of the policing system will do nothing to address the lack of trust between police and people of color. Senate Bill 115 will do nothing to fix our nation's broken system of policing. Instead, Senate Bill 115 will likely contribute to the problems in our current system of policing.

The dangerous escalation of police and civilian interactions is not conjecture. According to data collected and analyzed by Stanford University, white drivers were searched by police following a traffic stop 1.5-2 times less often than Black drivers, but simultaneously were more likely to be carrying contraband.¹ This past September, a sheriff's deputy in Clayton County pinned down and beat Roderick Walker, a Black man, following a routine traffic stop.² Senate Bill 115 sends a strong message, a message that ultimately insinuates that Roderick Walker and others who have experienced

¹ Mercer, Marsha. "[Police 'Pretext' Traffic Stops Need to End, Some Lawmakers Say.](#)" The Pew Charitable Trust. 3 Sept 2020

² Proctor, Aungelique. "[Roderick Walker: I 'feared for my life' during violent Clayton County arrest.](#)" Fox 5 Atlanta. 18 Sept 2020.

similar fates, are partially – if not wholly – to blame for their experiences with police brutality.

Legislators should be working to address the longstanding adversarial relationship between police and communities by helping to create police departments that work collaboratively and democratically with all of the communities they serve, thereby increasing transparency, accountability, trust, effectiveness, fairness, and public safety. Senate Bill 115 stands in the way of those efforts by wrongly placing the onus on civilians to protect themselves from harm when interacting with law enforcement officers.

We, the undersigned organizations, are dedicated to advancing social justice for the most vulnerable Georgians, and **we urge you to stand with us in opposition to Senate Bill 115.**

For Justice,

159 Georgia Together
ACLU of Georgia
Asian American Advocacy Fund
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
Black Voters Matter
Building Better Bridges Consulting, LLC
Common Cause Georgia
EMI
End Mass Incarceration Georgia
Network
Faith in Public Life
Feminist Women's Health Center
Georgia Association of Criminal Defense
Lawyers
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda-
Savannah
Georgia Equality
Georgia STAND-UP

Georgia WAND
Georgia WAND Education Fund
Georgia Working Families Party
Indivisible Georgia Coalition
Legal Action Center
NARAL Pro-Choice Georgia
New Georgia Project Action Fund
Poder Latinx
Progress Georgia
Rep GA Institute, Inc.
Represent GA Action Network, Inc.
Southern Center for Human Rights
SPLC Action Fund
Sur Legal Collaborative
The National Domestic Workers Alliance-
We Dream In Black Georgia
Urban League of Greater Atlanta
Women on the Rise GA
Women Watch Afrika, Inc. (WWA)