



Prepared Remarks
Christopher Bruce, Political Director

ACLU of Georgia
Senate Public Safety Committee
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Good Morning, my name is Christopher Bruce, and I am here on behalf of the ACLU of Georgia, our members, and our supporters throughout the state of Georgia. The ACLU of Georgia is an organization dedicated to protecting the civil liberties of all Georgians, and House Bill 286 poses grave risk to the civil liberties of Georgians. Thank you to this committee for the opportunity to speak to you today and to detail the ACLU of Georgia's opposition to House Bill 286.

House Bill 286 prohibits and penalizes county and municipal governments that choose to enact a meaningful and effective method of police reform. Specifically, lines 13 through 16 and lines 56 through 59 prohibit counties and municipalities that have their own police forces from the reducing the annual budgetary appropriation for their police forces by more than 5 percent of the previous fiscal year's appropriation for their police force.

What House Bill 286 ignores is the fact that American policing has never been a neutral institution. The first U.S. city police department was a [slave patrol](#), and modern police forces have directed oppression and violence at Black people to enforce Jim Crow, wage the War on Drugs, and crack down on protests. There can be no way any reasonable person could look at our current system of policing and in good faith argue that it is not in need of reform. When people ask for police reform, many are actually asking for this oppressive system to be dismantled and to invest in institutions, resources, and services that help communities grow and thrive. But House Bill 286 stands in the way of that.

Eighty Five percent (85%) of police funding is done at the local level, and Georgia spends 4.8 billion dollars annually on police and corrections. Funneling so many resources into policing instead of education, affordable housing, job training, and accessible health care has caused significant harm to communities, especially Black communities.

House Bill 286 is an attack on a method of police reform that can increase accountability and transparency in policing, and it is an attack on a method of police reform that can increase the public's trust in police- reducing police budgets is a method of reform that can do these things without adversely affecting public safety. By reducing funding, counties and municipalities can focus on diverting and reinvesting funds away from the punitive and harmful institution of policing, and into community-based and



community-led supportive services that uplift communities historically targeted and disproportionately harmed by police. If public safety is the goal, then it should be up to

the local elected officials who know their communities to allocate funding for public safety purposes without undue interference from the State Legislature.

By limiting the ability for local governments to enact police reform and accountability through reductions in police budgets, House Bill 286 stands in the way of one of the meaningful methods of police reform and in turn, it stands in the way of the ability for local governments to work towards fulfilling the promise of this nation - LIFE, Liberty and the Equality of opportunity for all.

Thank you.