



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

**JOHN COOPER
MAYOR**

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Dear Community Oversight Board Members:

Safety is government's first responsibility. All Nashvillians deserve to feel safe. Yet polls nationwide show that African-American and Latinx communities have lower levels of trust and satisfaction with police than white communities. There are many reasons for this. The U.S. criminal justice system has oppressed Black Americans for more years than it has protected them. It continues to punish African-Americans and people of color at disproportionate rates and in severe ways. Black men are more than twice as likely to be killed in an encounter with police as white men. Tactics such as "hot spot" policing have sometimes been used too aggressively and too indiscriminately, without the buy-in or approval of the communities where they are used.

It is time for a change – past time. All of you are already engaged in this vital work. I write you today to share my vision for change and to ask for your assistance and partnership in this effort.

Tomorrow, I will announce the Policing Policy Commission. I am creating this Commission in response to a call for action from President Barack Obama for cities to address use of force policies and practices. Its first purpose is to identify ways for the Metro Nashville Police Department (MNPD) to reduce the use of force. But the Commission also has a broader purpose: to begin a community-wide process of reimagining how Nashville can build trust and enhance community safety.

The Commission's membership reflects the diversity of our city. It includes members who are Black, white, Latinx, and MENSA (Middle Eastern, North African, Southern Asia). Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Its members are business owners and lawyers, a former District Attorney, and a former Public Defender and Mayor.

This group of 40 individuals reflects the diversity of our city. These members include a former Public Defender and a former District Attorney and Mayor; the chair of the Community Oversight Board and the Chair of the Public Safety Committee, also a former federal law enforcement officer; a former state representative and a judge who oversees the Mental Health and Veterans Courts; veteran civil rights and pro bono attorneys; pastors and community and youth activists; small business owners and established business leaders; two police officers and one retired police officer; a fifth grade teacher; a former School Board chair and Mayoral candidate; a PRIDE board member; downtown and hospitality industry leaders; workers' rights and social justice advocates; leaders in the fight against domestic violence and sex trafficking; our Juvenile Circuit Court Clerk; a young man who has experienced homelessness; and one of Nashville's most respected news anchors. It represents the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith traditions and includes Black, white, Latinx, and MENSA Nashvillians. It represents more than two dozen churches, nonprofits, and community organizations, including the



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Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship, the Urban League, Gideon's Army, Conexion Americas, NOAH, the National Black Police Association, End Slavery, the YWCA, Stand Up Nashville, the Oasis Center, Pride Nashville, and the Salahadeen Center of Nashville. This is Nashville making decisions about Nashville.

My office has worked with Metro Nashville Community Oversight (MNCO) to shape the mission statement for this Commission. The Community Oversight Board Chair, Ms. Davis, was the first person I called after making the decision to create this commission and the first person I invited to serve on it. My office asked MNCO to review MNPB policies and procedures, compare them to national best practices, and present those findings to the Commission. My office has worked with the MNPB to facilitate MNCO access to the materials needed to support that analysis and to do its own independent work.

The work of this Commission will inform the search for the new Chief of Police. As part of the job selection process, finalists will address in writing Commission recommendations. Their answers will inform the discussions of the interview panel and help me determine who the next Chief of Police should be.

I would like MNCO to play an important role in the Police Chief selection process as well. MNCO will be part of the candidate review process. My office is currently in the process of reaching out to community groups to get their input into what qualities the next Chief of Police should have and what her or his priorities should be. I would like to ask for your help with that outreach as we seek to engage with historically underrepresented communities and bring their perspectives into the search process.

I am a strong supporter of community oversight. I am committed to ensuring that our next Chief of Police works well with you and with MNCO. I appreciate your service and your partnership as we work together to make Nashville safe and just.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Cooper".

Mayor John Cooper