



A heart for the community in the heart of the community

2233 Main St., Hartford, CT 06120-2019 | Rev. Kevin T. Taylor, Pastor

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Gary A. Winfield, Co-Chair
The Honorable Steven J. Stafstrom, Co-Chair
The Joint Committee on Judiciary
Connecticut State Legislature
300 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Pass the Police Accountability Act

Dear Sen. Winfield and Rep. Stafstrom:

I am the pastor of Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church in Hartford. My members and I are urging the passage of the Police Accountability Act. I joined my Presiding Elder, the Rev. Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace, and the eight other pastors of A.M.E. churches in the state, on the steps of the Capital earlier this week in a press conference in support of this measure.

Advocating for social change is nothing new to Allen Chapel or to the A.M.E. Church writ large. For instance, our congregation has declared the third Tuesdays of each month "Social Action Tuesday." Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, already this year we have:

- Insisted that the U.S. Justice Department begin a federal investigation of the violence and inhumane treatment in the state of Mississippi prison system (*January*)
- Urged the Chairperson of the Democratic National Committee to change the primary process so that Iowa and New Hampshire no longer begin the presidential nominating process (*February*)
- Encouraged the Black Women serving in Congress to stand on the promises of God (*March*)
- Demanded that the federal government: (1) collect and release the breakdown of COVID-19 cases and deaths by race and ethnicity; (2) prioritize at-risk and underserved communities in all new bills that seek to help communities recover from the adverse healthcare and economic consequences of the pandemic; (3) make sure that race does not exclude all qualified people of color, the businesses and non-profits they represent (*April*)
- Joined the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, of which Allen Chapel is a charter member, in urging Governor Ned Lamont to stabilize Connecticut's rental housing market, leveraging available state and federal resources while also seeking additional supports (*May*)
- Pushed U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Christopher Murphy to support the federal Justice in Policing Act (*June*)

It follows then, that we would be asking the Joint Committee of Judiciary to seriously consider this legislation in the wake of the senseless killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers – and in deference to the 21 Connecticut residents who have died from police violence in the past five years.

To be clear, no bill is perfect. We welcome and expect vigorous debate and for the perspectives of communities, families, law enforcement, community leaders and constituents like ourselves to be considered. Nevertheless, the time to act is now. We cannot allow another person of color to die at the hands of law enforcement because these measures were not enacted.

In closing, five years ago, nine members of our sister congregation, Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, S.C., died in a senseless, racially motivated shooting. The victims included the pastor, the Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, who was also a South Carolina state senator. In response to this tragedy, the South Carolina Legislature took the courageous – but long overdue – act to remove the confederate flag in July 2015. Sadly, it took the Mississippi Legislature five years to vote to do the same – and only after the nationwide unrest because of the George Floyd murder. **To be clear, the State of Connecticut cannot wait five years, five months or even five weeks to take proactive measures to prevent what happened to George Floyd from happening in our communities. Pass the Police Accountability Act!**

Yours in Christ,


Rev. Kevin T. Taylor