

March 16, 2024

## **Statement on Revisions to Chapter 69 – Independent Policing Auditor & Community Oversight Board**

The NAACP reiterates its call for Arlington County to produce a broader version of the ordinance governing the Independent Policing Auditor & Community Oversight Board. For months last year, our elected leaders took secretive actions to attempt to amend the Chapter 69 Ordinance. The board attempted to skirt their legal obligation to publicly advertise the proposed changes by claiming the changes were administrative in nature. Nothing could be further from the truth. The NAACP counted over 170 proposed changes with hundreds of words removed and hundreds of words added. What's worse is that the county attempted to conceal these changes by listing changes to the ordinance on the consent agenda silencing the dozens of community voices that joined the call from the NAACP, ACLU, Arlington for Justice, and the Public Defender on producing a fair and just ordinance. Not a single member of the public had any opportunity to engage or provide any input on the 170+ changes that were made last year.

When Breonna Taylor was executed in her sleep, surprisingly the Louisville Civilian Oversight Board was not permitted to conduct their own investigation. In Minneapolis, the Civilian Oversight Board could not act on the 18 complaints that Derek Chauvin received before he murdered George Floyd. There are numerous lessons from the past and extensive national research conducted by law enforcement experts that should guide the composition of the Chapter 69 Ordinance in Arlington.

The NAACP calls on Arlington Government to make the following changes at the next revisiting of the ordinance, which we believe should occur this year as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement Negotiations.

1. All community stakeholders, including the NAACP, must be brought to the table for engagement before any changes are initiated.
2. The Independent Police Auditor/Community Oversight Board must be funded at least 1% of the Police Department's budget. This aligns with guidance from national experts in civilian oversight of law enforcement.
3. The Independent Police Auditor must be granted the authority to publicly release a report following an investigation(s).
4. The Independent Police Auditor/Community Oversight Board must be provided unfettered access to police records as a component of its oversight responsibilities. The ordinance never intended in letter or spirit to limit access and community trust in law enforcement is eroded when there is no oversight.

The process the Arlington County Board took last year perpetuates a long history of insularity in our county governance. It reveals an alarming power inversion in which the police seem to lead elected officials instead of elected officials leading law enforcement by engaging with the community. The trajectory of this outcome is woefully misaligned with this political moment in history.

The NAACP is the largest and most preeminent civil rights organization in the United States, and we have a vested interest in this ordinance. We will continue to advocate, agitate, and litigate until life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ring true for everyone, especially for historically impacted communities.