



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tennessee General Assembly Attempts to Abolish Civilian and Community Oversight of Police Departments in Memphis and Nashville in the Wake of the Killing of Tyre Nichols

The Tennessee State Conference of the NAACP calls on state lawmakers to oppose SB 0591/HB 0764. The bill will abolish the community oversight/civilian review boards in Memphis and Nashville. This is a slap in the face to Tennesseans concerned about police accountability in the wake of the killing of Tyre Nichols.

The bill is sponsored by Senator Mark Pody and Representative Elaine Davis, who filed it the week of the video release showing Memphis police officers killing Tyre Nichols. By proposing this bill, lawmakers are disregarding Memphis residents and Tennessee families traumatized by the Nichols' killing.

The passage of this bill will significantly worsen police-community tensions in that it:

- Prevents oversight/civilian review board investigations of use-of-force incidences prior to July 2023, including an investigation of the officers who killed Tyre Nichols.
- Threatens ongoing investigations of dozens of excessive force cases in Memphis and Nashville, meaning that officers with known records of bad behavior will continue to work without reprimand.
- Possibly invalidates existing Memoranda of Understanding and formal policy agreements between oversight boards and police departments.
- Endangers the employment status of current oversight/review board staff.
- Gives Mayors too much power in handpicking candidates to oversight/review board members without input from voters, impacted constituents, and civil rights groups.

At the State of the State address on Monday, Governor Bill Lee said the “courage [of the Nichols family], along with the compassion shown by the people of Memphis, is a picture of hope.” However, abolishing review and oversight boards turns this picture of hope into one of despair and is step backwards in the march towards police reform.

The Tennessee NAACP is calling upon state lawmakers, the governor, and the Memphis and Nashville police chiefs to oppose this bill, and in turn, to support a culture of healing during these trying times.

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