

# United States Senate

June 10, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Graham:

We write to request that you invite Attorney General Bill Barr to testify at the Committee's June 16<sup>th</sup> hearing on police use of force. This is a crucial topic for the country, and it is important that the Committee and American people hear from the nation's chief law enforcement officer.

Any significant hearing on police reform and community relations with law enforcement — and especially one that seeks to probe the existence of systemic racism and the use of excessive force in policing — should include the Attorney General. The Attorney General oversees multiple law enforcement agencies, including those tasked with investigations into allegations of police misconduct. In fact, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is currently investigating George Floyd's death to determine whether the Minneapolis Police Department officers involved violated federal law.

More broadly, it is the Attorney General who sets Justice Department policy and makes determinations regarding Departmental resources. During the Obama Administration, several important policing reforms were undertaken — including entering into more than a dozen consent decrees with police departments to change policing practices, and restrictions on the transfer of surplus military equipment to state and local police. These and other reforms were quickly reversed by President Trump's first Attorney General, Jeff Sessions. Attorney General Barr must be called on June 16<sup>th</sup> to answer questions about the Department's law enforcement priorities and what is being done to investigate and end police misconduct, including through pattern-or-practice cases led by the Department's Civil Rights Division.

We also believe that this Committee needs to hold an additional, separate hearing with Attorney General Barr to examine the Justice Department's response to the nationwide protests that followed Mr. Floyd's death. Attorney General Barr was at the center of the decision to remove peaceful protestors near the White House through use of tear gas and rubber bullets. Members should have an

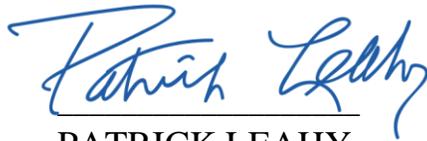
opportunity to question the Attorney General about the use of force against demonstrators exercising their First Amendment rights, the deployment of federal law enforcement assets in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere, and the treatment of journalists covering the protests and the law enforcement response. These hearings should be separate from an annual oversight hearing at which the Attorney General can be questioned, more generally, about the Department's work and priorities.

The issues facing the nation fall squarely within the Judiciary Committee's jurisdiction. As Americans seek answers on police reform and to vindicate their civil, human, and constitutional rights, this Committee will be center stage. Given the gravity of these issues, and the singular leadership role occupied by the Attorney General, we should hear directly from Mr. Barr.

Sincerely,



DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
Ranking Member



PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator



RICHARD J. DURBIN  
United States Senator



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE  
United States Senator



AMY KLOBUCHAR  
United States Senator



CHRISTOPHER A. COONS  
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO  
United States Senator



CORY A. BOOKER  
United States Senator



KAMALA D. HARRIS  
United States Senator