



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6538**

June 11, 2021

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

As you begin your tenure as our nation's 86th Attorney General, one issue that demands your immediate attention is the alarming rise in crime rates across the United States. Crime has increased in American cities over the past year—dramatically in some cases—as cities have moved to defund their police forces. Now, as many police departments are bracing for what experts predict will be a violent summer,<sup>1</sup> we are concerned about whether the Biden Administration is prepared to address the surge of violent crime in American cities.<sup>2</sup>

The radical and reckless decisions by some jurisdictions to defund their police forces have had a real and devastating effect on American communities. Crime is on the rise in nearly every category, but perhaps most disturbing is the increase in homicides in major American cities. The murder rate in major cities increased 33 percent overall in 2020, making it the worst year since the mid-1990s.<sup>3</sup> Austin, Texas, saw a 50 percent spike in homicides in 2020,<sup>4</sup> and Los Angeles experienced an increase of 11.6 percent in homicides.<sup>5</sup> In Minneapolis, the homicide rate increased 72 percent,<sup>6</sup> while Portland, Oregon, witnessed the most murders in a year in 27

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Walsh, *It's set to be a hot, violent summer*, Axios (May 1, 2021), <https://www.axios.com/murder-rates-rise-2021-coronavirus-pandemic-0b9855ad-4b54-4639-ad1f-871e8aa03063.html>

<sup>2</sup> See Sadie Gurman, *Police Overhauls Help Fight Crime, Biden Administration Official Says*, Wall St. J. (May 26, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/article/police-overhauls-help-fight-crime-biden-administration-official-says-11622031515>.

<sup>3</sup> Emma Tucker and Peter Nickeas, *The US saw significant crime rise across major cities in 2020. And it's not letting up*, CNN (April 3, 2021) <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/03/us/us-crime-rate-rise-2020/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Hilsenrath, *Homicide Spike Hits Most Large U.S. Cities*, Wall St. J. (Aug 2, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/homicide-spike-cities-chicago-newyork-detroit-us-crime-police-lockdown-coronavirus-protests-11596395181>.

<sup>5</sup> Julie Wernau and Joe Barnett, *Police Wrestle with Surge in Crime in U.S. Cities Amid Defunding Efforts*, Wall St. J. (July 11, 2020) [https://www.wsj.com/articles/police-wrestle-with-surge-in-crime-in-u-s-cities-amid-defunding-efforts-11594472400?mod=article\\_inline](https://www.wsj.com/articles/police-wrestle-with-surge-in-crime-in-u-s-cities-amid-defunding-efforts-11594472400?mod=article_inline).

<sup>6</sup> Stephanie Pagonis, *Crime Wave 2020: These cities smashed homicide records amid nationwide crime spike*, Fox News (Dec. 30, 2020), <https://www.foxnews.com/us/crime-wave-2020-homicide-records-nationwide-crime-spike>

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years.<sup>7</sup> In Chicago, 18 people were murdered in a single day in 2020—the city’s most violent day in six decades.<sup>8</sup>

The early data shows no improvement in crime rates for 2021. According to recent data, several major American cities have reported increased homicide rates in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.<sup>9</sup> For example, Chicago has experienced a 36 percent increase in homicides in 2021.<sup>10</sup> Philadelphia reported a 25 percent increase in homicides so far in 2021, and Los Angeles reported a 41 percent increase.<sup>11</sup>

In the face of deteriorating public safety in American communities, it confounds us, and we hope you, that cities across the country even entertain the idea of defunding their police departments. Yet, over the past year, we have seen several major cities pursue these radical and reckless policies. Last year, Los Angeles defunded its police department to the tune of \$150 million, reducing its police force to its lowest levels in a decade.<sup>12</sup> San Francisco cut its police budget by \$120 million,<sup>13</sup> even as the city reported significant increases in homicides, burglaries, arsons, and thefts.<sup>14</sup> Seattle cut its police budget by \$69 million as homicides in the city hit the highest levels in over a decade.<sup>15</sup> Most shockingly, after slashing its police budget by nearly \$1 billion, New York City saw a 97 percent rise in shootings and almost a 45 percent increase in homicides.<sup>16</sup> And, notably, the Congressional Budget Office confirmed that H.R. 1280, the “George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021,” passed on a party line vote in the House of Representatives in March, would place an unfunded mandate on state and local police departments, costing them “several hundred million of dollars annually.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pat Dooris, *Portland has had 52 homicides so far this year, the most in 27 years*, KGW8 (Dec. 18, 2020), <https://www.kgw.com/article/news/crime/most-homicides-in-portland-in-27-years/283-b530bef4-5e02-4722-a418-8f50bf03e3fe>

<sup>8</sup> Tommy Beer, *18 People Were Murdered In Chicago On May 31, Making It The City's Single Deadliest Day In 60 Years*, Forbes (Jun. 8, 2020), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2020/06/08/18-people-were-murdered-in-chicago-on-may-31-making-it-the-citys-single-deadliest-day-in-60-years/?sh=10c2613f7fb7>

<sup>9</sup> *VIOLENT CRIME SURVEY – NATIONAL TOTALS First Quarter Comparison January 1 to March 31, 2021 and 2020*, Report, Major City Chiefs of Police, (May 14, 2021), <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MCCA-Violent-Crime-Report-2021-and-2020-First-Quarter.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Erin Myers and Rick Chambers, *L.A. cuts LAPD spending by \$150 million, taking police staffing to lowest level in more than a decade*, Associated Press, (Jul. 1, 2020), available at <https://ktla.com/news/local-news/l-a-cuts-lapd-spending-by-150-million-taking-police-staffing-to-its-lowest-level-in-12-years/>

<sup>13</sup> Alix Martichoux, *San Francisco Mayor London Breed Announces Cuts to Police in New City Budget*, ABC 7 News (July 31, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Ella Sogomonian, *Criminals Are Shifting their Behavior amid the Pandemic: San Francisco Police*, KRON 4 News (Dec. 15, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Mairead McArdle, *Seattle to Slash Police Budget as Homicides Hit Highest Level in over a Decade*, Nat’l Review (Dec. 1, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Ben Chapman, *New York City Homicides and Shootings Rose Dramatically in 2020*, Wall St. J. (Jan. 7, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-homicides-and-shootings-rose-dramatically-in-2020-11610055243>.

<sup>17</sup> Swagel, Philip L. “H.R. 1280, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021.” Received by The Honorable Jason Smith, 9 Mar. 2021, [www.cbo.gov/system/files/2021-03/Hon\\_Jason\\_Smith\\_Response\\_Letter\\_0.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2021-03/Hon_Jason_Smith_Response_Letter_0.pdf).

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The mission of the Department of Justice is, in part, to ensure public safety and to provide federal leadership in preventing crime.<sup>18</sup> Now, more than ever, the men and women of American law-enforcement agencies across the country need strong and vocal federal support. As local law enforcement agencies brace for a difficult summer, we ask that you reject the radical demands of those who wish to weaken law enforcement by defunding the police and other tactics. We must support law enforcement and the vital work they do each day to serve our communities and keep us safe. Of primary importance is the strong support that you and the U.S. Department of Justice can provide by rejecting radical and reckless proposals to defund the police.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader



Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary

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<sup>18</sup> Dep't of Justice, About DOJ, Our Mission Statement, <https://www.justice.gov/about>.