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Wednesday, July 1, 2020

Assembly Public Safety Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support Assembly Bill 66

To the Honorable Committee Members:

I am Nicholas Gonzales of the California Civil Liberties Advocacy (CCLA). The CCLA writes you today to explain why we SUPPORT Assembly Bill 66 (AB-66). Our review of most recent events regarding law enforcement and their use of arms upon non-violent citizens can be described as no less than scathing. While this bill does not restrict qualified immunity nor many other social contracts that have been abused by law enforcement, it does reduce their ability to cause collateral harm to the citizenry utilizing their right to peaceably assemble.

The CCLA has many times written about the need for law enforce and the communities that they were intended to serve to be closer to strengthen public trust, safety, and cooperation. That by using more heavy militarization and removing transparency, law enforcement officers do substantial harm to their ability to adequately serve their communities in having communities refuse to work with them. In that vein, it is a slap in the face of a given community that when they should rise to speak out against the excesses and misdeeds they perceive from their local peace officers or those abroad that – rather than reaching out with compassion or a cooperative hand – law enforcement around the United States, including California, have responded by initiating violence against citizens, such as in Compton (1), Beverly Hills (2), and Sacramento (3). To add insult to an injured Nation and to divide communities further from law enforcement, such callous acts as to disperse crowd violently with tear gas for photo opportunities of the Executive Branch, or to say that looting which started as a response to an individual dying in police custody was partly to blame for the death which led to them (4) intensifies these harms.

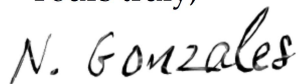
*"I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government."  
– Henry David Thoreau*

These kinds of acts upon citizens have greatly harmed community trust in the institutions meant to protect them and their rights granted by the Constitution. For a great deal of our nation they have dashed this trust outright. To a great deal of our nation “peace officers” are lost, and we are only left with enforcement. Hopefully by passing AB-66 we can start to turn this alienation around. AB-66 narrows the scope of the use of force by peace officers to where it should have been at the beginning. Peace officers, that is officers to maintain peace, should be incapable of firing without a clear threat of harm. Furthermore, AB-66 addresses peace officer's ethical and moral obligation to fire only upon those that are the threat – indiscriminate fire into a crowd surrounding a threat escalates tensions and only temporarily pacifies the encounter when it pacifies at all.

Assembly Bill 66 won't be enough to heal the wounds caused by these kinds of events. AB-66 may, however, be enough string to stitch the wound closed enough that other restoratives may take effect. Recent events have – again - shed light upon a deepening divide between peace officers and the communities they are meant to serve. As a bare minimum, if peace officers wish to continue as an institution, changes must be made to their tactics and their definitions of actionable threats. Thank you, Assembly Bill 66 for helping define these changes. Thank you, Assemblymember Gonzales for championing this change.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the CCLA supports AB-66.

Yours truly,



Nicholas Gonzales  
Legislative Advocate  
California Civil Liberties Advocacy

1. [https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/black-lives-matter-protests-06-21-2020/h\\_57a09d6fca5d60c2621add2398f92a8](https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/black-lives-matter-protests-06-21-2020/h_57a09d6fca5d60c2621add2398f92a8)
2. <https://patch.com/california/beverlyhills/beverly-hills-police-fire-tear-gas-protesters>
3. <https://www.davisvanguard.org/2020/06/sacramento-legal-observer-shot-in-face-by-police-at-protest-demands-arrest-of-officer/>
4. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-06/lapd-chief-moore-under-fire-over-looting-remarks-police-treatment-of-protesters>