**FIRST PERSON: MORE TRANSPARENCY WILL HELP RESTORE PUBLIC'S TRUST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Michigan launches new initiative to collect, report on use-of-force incidents

“The goal of our Law Enforcement Transparency Collaborative is to push our agencies in Michigan toward 100 percent participation.”

By Michigan Sen. Stephanie Chang

I represent much of Detroit — a city full of people who hustle hard and whose incredible resilience was built up through enormous challenges. Detroit put the world on wheels, is the home of Motown and, to this day, remains at the epicenter of national movements.

In fact, two months before the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech in Washington, D.C., he led a “Detroit Walk to Freedom” in which more than 125,000 people marched — 20 years to the day after the 1943 Detroit uprising — that concluded with an earlier version of his now-famous speech.

Since June 23, 1963, some things have changed, but some major issues are the same — including the continuation of police brutality.

In 2015, the only database related to any kind of use of force by police was created by The Washington Post, but it only showed fatal police shootings.

According to the Post’s data, there have been 78 police shootings in Michigan since 2015. Of course, that doesn’t let us see the whole picture, and this is where my story of working for more than five years (so far) on increasing transparency begins.

**MICHIGAN COLLABORATIVE BUILDS ON NEW FBI DATABASE**

From “The Talk” that Black parents must give to their children at a young age, to the trauma of watching George Floyd’s murder on video — knowing it could have been one’s own brother, father or uncle — Black Americans and other people of color know far too well the issues of excessive use of force by police officers.

Knowing this, when I took office in 2015, I began to look for a way to require law enforcement agencies in Michigan to report data to the state on use-of-force and officer-involved shootings — broken down by racial, gender and ethnic demographics.

I had productive conversations with law enforcement and social justice stakeholders on my legislation, but never got a committee hearing. This term, however, we had a new opportunity.

In conversations with Bob Stevenson, the executive director of the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, we decided to pursue a collaborative approach that builds on a new dataset, with the hope that a new database could make a difference.

**DATA ON USE-OF-FORCE INCIDENTS WILL INFORM POLICY**

Currently, three types of use-of-force events are captured by the FBI and its National Use of Force Data Collection:

- when a fatality to a person occurs connected to use of force by a law enforcement officer;
- when there is serious bodily injury to a person connected to use of force by a law enforcement officer; and
- in the absence of either death or serious bodily injury, when a firearm is discharged by law enforcement at, or in the direction of, a person.

The LET-C data collection also includes the incident date, the number and demographics of the officers involved, demographics of the subjects involved, and the type of force used in the incident.

With this information, we hope to provide a thorough dataset that would increase transparency — which is key to rebuilding trust between police officers and community members. In addition, this effort can generate conversations among lawmakers, law enforcement personnel and members of community organizations about how we can improve a police force that serves and protects everyone.

People in our communities are looking to us for change, and this collaboration is an important step forward for restoring transparency, accountability and trust in our law enforcement officers.

I am honored to have helped make this happen, and excited to continue the push for 100 percent participation in Michigan.

I encourage lawmakers in other states to consider building similar partnerships because every community can benefit from more transparency.

Michigan Sen. Stephanie Chang serves as Democratic floor leader in the state Senate. She was first elected to the Senate in 2018 and previously served in the Michigan House.

**# OF PEOPLE SHOT AND KILLED BY POLICE: JAN. 1, 2015, TO JULY 22, 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of people shot and killed by police who were Black or Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>29.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Washington Post

**SUBMISSIONS WELCOME**

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