



September 9, 2020

Mayor Ron Nirenberg and Members of City Council  
100 Military Plaza #4  
San Antonio, TX 78205

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### **Faith Leaders Unite to Ban Chokeholds and No-Knock Warrants**

COPS/Metro, in partnership with Community Churches for Social Action (CCSA), and the Baptist Ministers' Union (BMU) calls on the City of San Antonio to take direct and immediate action to completely ban police use of any neck restraint (strangleholds, chokeholds) collectively referred to as lateral vascular neck restraint (LVNR), along with the use of no-knock warrants in *any* instance. Although changes have been made to San Antonio policing policy since the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, these changes do not go far enough.

One only needs to look around the country to understand why complete bans on these procedures are needed, both to ensure the safety of citizens and build trust with communities of color. In the past month alone, we have seen the impacts of systemic racism on communities. Jacob Blake was shot seven times in the back by police as his children looked on, while here in our own San Antonio community, a local insurance adjuster, Mathais Ometu, was detained, manhandled, and jailed for the simple offense of jogging while Black. Systemic racism and bias are widespread and deeply rooted, and San Antonio is no exception. We must follow the examples of cities like Dallas, Minneapolis, New York, and Louisville; each of which have enacted policies that aim to take subjectivity and officer discretion out of the equation when it comes to the use of tactics that disproportionately dehumanize Black and Brown people.

Police Chief McManus argues that the city has already made changes to prohibit the use of the chokehold and no-knock warrants, but after reviewing the San Antonio Police General Operating Manual available on the city's transparency website, [Section 501](#) and [Section 504](#) both have clear language that allow these dangerous practices. Chokeholds can be used as one of multiple deadly force options if the officer has "reasonable belief" that their life or the lives of others are in danger, while no knock warrants are also permissible if "the officer in charge can articulate particular exigent circumstances" that would require an unannounced entry. After bearing witness to unjust uses of force only compounded by lax police discipline and accountability procedures, how can communities trust in the "reasonable use" of these deadly tactics?

Many of our local conversations about police reform become wrapped up in the intricacies and limitations of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the San Antonio Police Officers Association (SAPOA) and the city. Although there is much in the CBA that needs to be addressed, we don't need to wait until 2021 to make specific, actionable change on these two policies that threaten the lives of our citizens and further damage and erode trust between Black and Brown communities and police. The City Council has the power to change these policies today.

If white community members were disproportionately arrested, profiled, assaulted, and killed by the use of these two use of force policies, certainly the policies would be changed immediately.

Will San Antonio rise to the occasion and put its money where its mouth is in the fight for equal justice and policing? For us to truly live into the "Compassionate SA" ethos, we must make the strides *available to us today*. Each step pushes us forward in the march toward equity. COPS/Metro, Community Churches for Social Action and the Baptist Ministers' Union call on City Council to do what is right: take action and immediately ban the use of chokeholds and no-knock warrants.

Sincerely,

**Sr. Gabriella Lohan, Sisters of the Holy Spirit**

Leader, COPS/Metro

**Pastor Patrick Jones, Pastor, Greater Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church**

President, Baptist Minister's Union

**Dr. Jerry Wm Dailey, Pastor, Macedonia Baptist Church**

Chairman, Community Churches for Social Action (CCSA)