

AB-392, though with good intentions, will not make any positive impacts beyond the current Penal Codes. It does not introduce effective rules to reduce police-involved killings. It does not address the underlying core issues. Instead, it could have negative impacts on the police force. Therefore, AB-392 should not pass. It should be reworked so that real progress can be made to reduce police-involved killings.

Firstly, AB-392 will be ineffective. In a 2016 study, Samuel Sinyangwe tested whether administrative policies would curb police-involved killings. Eight policies were proven to have a positive impact. Implementation of four or more of these rules resulted in 37% fewer police-involved killings per population (Sinyangwe 3). Clearly, these rules are effective, yet AB-392 does not include any of them. Additionally, even the Black Lives Matter movement withdrew its support, citing that AB-392 is focused on the wrong issue and will fail “to prevent police killings and the devaluation of human life within our communities” (“Black Lives Matter Network Withdraws Support From California’s AB-392”). It is clear that AB-392 does not prescribe the right policies.

Secondly, AB-392 will have negative impacts on California’s police force. It will perpetrate the Ferguson Effect that describes the deterioration of trust in the police force and a slow decline in police activity after the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mississippi. More controversial and tragic incidents have followed. Consequently, officers feel that they are “under siege, and don’t feel much like getting out of cars” (qtd. in Hosko 19-20). For example, a Birmingham, Alabama, detective who stopped a man was beaten bloody and unconscious in 2015. When asked why he failed to use appropriate force to stop the assault, the detective reported he feared becoming the subject of the next viral video (Hosko 20). This reluctance to use appropriate force has translated into increased crime rates, as shown by FBI reports. Violent crime rates were

up by 3.1% and murder rates 10.8% in 2015 (FBI: UCR 2015), and another increase of 4.1% and 8.6%, respectively, in 2016 (FBI: UCR 2016). With all the controversies casting police in a negative light, a police officer will see AB-392 as another sign of mistrust, which is extremely demoralizing. Police often make split-second decisions that are life and death in nature, and AB-392 could hamper the decision-making process, making police more reluctant to use force and endangering their own lives and those of innocent bystanders.

Thirdly, high-profile incidents that have garnered national coverage, though emotional and horrific, are in the minority. This is not to trivialize the said incidents, but to simply point out that intense media coverage often leads to skewed perception. According to CNN, there were 13 shootings from 2005 to 2018 that resulted in significant protests (“Controversial Police Encounters Fast Facts”). In some cases, the officers involved were clearly at fault; in others, witnesses differed to an extent such that the victims might have been at fault. We must ask the question of what drives these unfortunate killings if a real solution is to be developed. The answer is complex, yet there are clearly several core issues at play. One is suspects not following orders given by the police. Another is a lack of transparency with the investigation process. Third is the animosity of communities against the police force. These issues, perpetrated by inaccurate and biased media coverage, are at the core of police-involved shootings. They should be at the forefront of consideration. There is a strong need for more education on police encounters and more responsible journalism. Yet AB-392 completely ignores these critical issues that can have a meaningful and positive impact.

In conclusion, AB-392 will not effectively mitigate the use of deadly force by police. It does not instruct police officers on appropriate course of action in situations where deadly force might be called for. Additionally, AB-392 perpetrates the mistrust against police officers that has

been intensified by controversial incidents taking a national spotlight. The actions of a few faulty officers have thrown every department in a bad light. Thus, it is crucial to re-establish trust. AB-392 is not the right bill to carry out that mission; instead, this must be a larger movement that will extend beyond a set of amendments. Education is needed for both police officers and civilians to understand each other. Journalism must make more of an effort to be responsible and accurate.

At the end of the day, everyone wants one thing: justice. But justice does not come by accusing officers who are later found to have done nothing wrong; justice does not come with bills that promise a goal but accomplish nothing. Justice comes from reflecting on situations with an open mind, from reviewing the evidence to decide who was wrong and who was right. A bill that restricts the use of deadly force in all the wrong ways will not lower the rate of police-involved shootings. People do not want empty words; people want results.

Works Cited

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