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Oakland's Independent Police Commission Passes Search Protections for People on Probation or Parole

[Oakland, CA. April 12, 2019] Late last night, Oakland's Police Commission unanimously passed a new policy which requires that police officers have an actual reason to search a person on probation or parole for a non-violent offence. The commission drafted the new policy after consulting with people who had been subjected to repeated searches, criminal justice advocates, and the Oakland Police Department (OPD).

The Police Commission will consider comments from OPD until May 9 before submitting the new policy to the Public Safety Committee and then to the full City Council. Unless the council votes to reject it, the policy will go into effect.

OPD statistics show that random searches based solely on the person being on probation or parole do little to promote public safety as few weapons are recovered and little evidence of criminal activity is found. A common condition of parole or probation is submitting to searches at any time. The new policy covers Oakland residents and visitors on probation, parole, mandatory supervision, or post-release community supervision (PRCS).

Alameda County Public Defender Brendon Woods said, "This new policy is a step in the right direction in addressing the community mistrust that historically has plagued the Oakland Police Department. It will prevent Oakland officers from arbitrarily stopping and automatically searching members of our community simply because they are on probation or parole. Too often police use searches and detentions to target people of color. This policy has the potential to help fix that."

The Police Commission was established in 2016 by a charter amendment, which passed with 83% of the votes. Since the commissioners were initially seated, the mayor and city administration have opposed the commission's independence and resources. In December, OPD and city administration tried to circumvent the commission's role in creating policy by

presenting a weaker draft policy directly to the City Council. The council rejected that draft and requested the commission draft a new policy after consulting with OPD.

The 2019 city council, with three new members who made campaign commitments to support the commission's independence and police accountability, is viewed as more supportive of the Police Commission and more willing to demand reform and address the problems which have caused 15 years of federal oversight. Recent federal monitor reports revealed that OPD had reported progress in error and the court has expressed alarm at OPD backsliding.

John Jones III, Community and Political Engagement Director at the Dellums Institute, was incarcerated: "This policy will make a real difference for people on probation and parole trying to rebuild their lives. No matter how many times police find nothing, they pull you over again tomorrow."

The Coalition for Police Accountability (CPA) is made up of organizations and individuals representing over 10,000 Oaklanders dedicated to ensuring safe and constitutional policing for all residents.

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