



Senate Committee on Judiciary
Re: HB 3216 A

May 8, 2019

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 3216 A, which would create a civil cause of action for a person who has been harmed by another individual who has unlawfully summoned police.

My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color. We are an alliance of culturally specific community based organizations, with a mission to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism and inequity of services experienced by our families, children, and communities; and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.

Everyone has a right to participate fully as a member of our community and to go about their daily activities without fear of harassment, intimidation, or unfair targeting on the basis of their identity. In violation of this value of basic fairness, many individuals have been the victims of unlawful summoning of police where there is no actual public safety issue. While genuine public safety issues may necessitate law enforcement intervention, these calls are often motivated by bias and discrimination, creating a climate of fear for individuals and communities of color and reducing their safety. These unlawful calls also result in a waste of public resources and reduce law enforcement's ability to respond to actual threats.

This legislation provides a remedy to the injustice of unlawful summoning where none currently exists. It sends a clear message to the community that summoning the police should only be done to address genuine safety concerns. Under the proposed legislation, individuals can still call law enforcement if they have a serious safety concern or experience an emergency. It establishes a civil cause of action, not a criminal one, and has been carefully designed to prevent misuse. A civil case is an appropriate mechanism to seek justice when an individual has knowingly called the police with the intent to discriminate, harass, or expel someone from a place they have the right to be.

While people of color are frequently the targets of unjustified calls to police, the proposed law will also provide recourse to all people experiencing homelessness who are intimidated into leaving public accommodations.

Unnecessary contact with police can cause a dangerous situation for all involved, and our priority must be public safety and fairness. HB 3216 A will help advance both. On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I respectfully urge you to vote yes on HB 3216 A. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this legislation.

Sincerely,
Jenny Lee, Advocacy Director
Coalition of Communities of Color

