

Police Accountability Groups Denounce Backdoor Move to Weaken Access to Misconduct Records

Newly Passed Budget Trailer Bill Suspends Transparency Provisions in Police Decertification Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO - In 2021, SB 2, the Kenneth Ross Jr. Police Decertification Act, was passed to protect people from abusive police officers. Barely a year later, those goals have been undermined by Governor Newsom's decision to use a backdoor budget mechanism to weaken the public's access to police misconduct records. This part of the bill is vital to maintain transparency and the integrity of the law in order to ultimately save lives from police who kill and abuse community members. The offending trailer bill language is awaiting the Governor's signature.

"This does not represent the will of the people who fought hard for this bill in the midst of the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings. Families of those killed by police, organizers, and allies flooded the streets uplifting names like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Kenneth Ross, Jr. We put our lives, bodies, and freedom on the line to win transformative change that included police accountability such as SB2." said Sheila Bates of Black Lives Matter CA and Black Lives Matter Los Angeles.

"This is a dangerous step backwards that will be most felt by those that have been, and continue to be, terrorized by the police. For these communities, the consequences are life and death," said Emilio Zapién of the Youth Justice Coalition.

The changes to SB 2 make the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), the watchdog agency tasked with overseeing police departments, essentially complicit in shielding officer misdeeds from the public eye. As a result, misconduct records will remain out of reach for anyone who does not have the means to wage a costly legal fight to obtain them from uncooperative police departments. This is of deep concern, considering roadblocks to accountability we have seen and fought against at every level of these interconnected systems.

The absolute necessity of protecting SB 2 has been highlighted by recent revelations of serious misconduct and racism in police departments across California.

In 2021, [numerous bigoted acts](#) by the Torrance Police Department came to light. For years, police exchanged extensive threatening, racist, homophobic, anti-Black, antisemitic, and transphobic text messages - including messages about organizers who dared to speak up. They also painted a swastika on an impounded vehicle. Those implicated in the scandal include former Torrance PD cops who are temporarily decertified: Anthony Chavez, Matthew

Concannon, and Brian Kawamoto- who are responsible for the murder of Christopher De'Andre Mitchell. Anthony Chavez and Matthew Concannon are now facing felony charges for his murder.

Similarly, this year nearly half of the officers (45 of 99) in the Antioch Police Department were found to have been in a group chat where racist, sexist, violent, and homophobic texts were exchanged. The Antioch Police Department has [historically refused to turn over use-of-force records](#). Some of these involved incidents where officers choked people until they lost consciousness and allowed K9 dogs to attack people, causing serious disfigurement.

Lives are on the line. The Protect SB 2 Coalition will not stop fighting to restore the integrity of our decertification law as originally written. Our lawmakers must step up to ensure the community is not intentionally left in the dark about officers who have committed serious misconduct.