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For
PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
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POLICE REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS
(Adopted By The General Membership June 2, 2026)

1.0 Police Civilian Interface:

- 1.1 Civilian oversight of police operations is essential in a democratic society and the Massachusetts Association for Professional Law Enforcement (MAPLE) fully and unequivocally supports this principle.
- 1.2 MAPLE does not support Civilian Review Boards (CRBS) as a means of improving civilian oversight of the police. We agree with the Christopher Commission, that instituting this form of oversight would only increase the division that currently exists between police agencies and the communities they serve.
- 1.3 While civilian oversight is essential, there must be an acknowledgement by civilian authority, that the management of police operations requires professional expertise. Civilian authority always retains ultimate responsibility and authority for police accountability, but it should not attempt to micromanage police operations. This requires expertise, which can only be obtained by education, training and professional experience.
- 1.4 We recommend that MGL Chapter 41, Section 97 be repealed. The so-called “Weak Chief’s” law grants authority and responsibility to civilian boards of selectmen to serve as the chief administrative authority for the police agencies in their communities. Under this law the Chief of Police is an “at-will” employee. We believe that this law is fundamentally unsound and opens policing, in the communities where it applies, to political manipulation and incompetent policy development. Civilian leadership does not have the expertise to set day to day operational policies for police agencies.
- 1.5 MAPLE fully endorse MGL Chapter 41 Section 97A, the so-called “Strong Chief’s” law. Under its provisions local select boards empower chiefs of police to serve as the chief executive officer of the department, with full authority for promulgating the agency’s rules and regulations and discipline.
 - 1.5.1 It is recommended, however, that Chiefs be given term contracts ranging from 3 to 5 years subject to renewal.
 - 1.5.2 Removal of the chief must be by just cause.
- 1.6 In order for a police agency to be effective, the problem of external political interference, particularly with regard to selection, assignment, discipline and promotion of agency personnel must be addressed.
 - 1.6.1 While outside interests have the right to register their opinions and recommendations as to the internal operation of a police agency, the use of coercion or duress or the offer of a “quid pro quo” to the chief, by civilian political interests for the purposes of influencing decisions advantageous to a particular political constituency or individual must be prohibited.

- 1.6.2 A police chief must be free to operate and must be protected by a term contract, that explicitly addresses the problem of illicitly interfering with the internal operations of the agency.
- 1.7 As communities grow and urbanize, the civilian oversight model which is utilized by town government may not necessarily prove effective in larger urban areas. MAPLE recommends that for the cities of the commonwealth, the commission system should be made available to communities through local option.
 - 1.7.1 We further recommend the model utilized by the City of Los Angeles. It maximizes civilian involvement in police management. The commission serves as a defacto board of directors. The commissioners are civilians, but they have the authority to direct policy for the agency.
 - 1.7.2 The Chief of police serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the agency exercising full control over day to day operations and discipline.
 - 1.7.3 The chief serves under a term contract where removal must be supported by just cause. All meetings between the Commission and the Chief of Police are public with the exception of those cases involving sensitive personnel/discipline matters, or matters involving issues of counterterrorism.
- 1.8 In the case of the Massachusetts State Police, it is imperative that the Colonel have independence of action and be protected from political meddling with the agency's internal affairs. MAPLE recommends that all future Colonel's serve under a five year contract with the Governor with removal for just cause.
 - 1.8.1 To ensure proper oversight of the agency, we further recommend that a state police commission be appointed along the lines and parameters of the LA Police Commission and that the Colonel report directly to this commission.
 - 1.8.2 The Commission would be responsible for regular audits of the agency regarding all administrative and operational matters. Its' members shall be appointed by the Governor and shall serve one five year term.
 - 1.8.3 The Colonel shall retain day to day management of the agency, to include discipline. All meetings of the commission and the state police Colonel should be public except where sensitive matters related to personnel or counter-terrorism are involved.

2.0 Strategic Planning/Corrective Action:

- 2.1 Agency Strategic Planning is a fundamental responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief bears responsibility for organizing and leading a strategic planning team. This team should be composed of all key agency leaders to include those who lead the patrol, investigative, administration and training functions of the agency.
 - 2.1.1 The strategic planning team should meet frequently and regularly to identify trends and developments within the agency's operating environment, formulate plans for adapting to these trends and developments, and constantly monitor the implementation of those plans.
 - 2.1.2 The strategic planning team should communicate its findings to civilian leadership and should serve as the primary resource for the formulation of all public policy related to public safety in the community.
- 2.2 The mission of the strategic planning steam is to formulate an effective strategic plan that covers a designated period time. The plan should clearly identify the challenges, that will confront the agency during that time. It should reflect a realistic assessment of the agency's strengths and weakness in the face of these anticipated challenges and it should identify the values and strategies that the agency will rely upon to achieve its mission during the course of the plan. Specific goals and objectives to be achieved must be presented.

2.3 The strategic planning team must be supported by a corrective action program, that can receive feedback from the agency's sworn and unsworn personnel; as well as, the general public. The corrective action program must be able to receive concerns, complaints and observations related to the performance of the agency.

- 2.3.1 Utilizing the strategic plan as a guide, the strategic planning team is responsible for responding to the information and criticism that is received. Documentation of corrective action reports; as well as, the response to them should be the subject of audits by civilian leadership.
- 2.3.2 Provisions must be made both in law and in agency regulations that protect open communications within the corrective action system. Prohibitions should be implemented that that would prohibit management from creating a "chilling effect" on reporting critical information.
- 2.3.3 Civilian complaints against individual officers, should be addressed through a separate specially dedicated system.

2.3 An essential aspect of a Strategic Planning/Corrective Action program is the establishment of a safety conscious work environment. The Safety of the public and of the agency's personnel must be a priority for the strategic planning team. Communications related to unsafe practices or conditions must be expeditiously received and addressed by the team. The agency is responsible for instilling a safety conscious mindset throughout the organization. Safety awareness must be a central concern in both supervisory decisions and in matters involving officer discretion.

3.0 Protecting Agency Integrity :

3.1 In addition to the "oath of office", all police officers, upon their appointment, must also publicly affirm their commitment to conduct themselves in accordance with a code of ethics. The elements of this code should include:

- 3.1.1 A commitment to treat all persons fairly and respectfully. To be truthful in all aspects of required duties, particularly with regard to court or legal testimony, in official reports and affidavits, and in cooperation with authorized internal affairs investigations. A personal pledge not to accept bribes or gratuities should be included.
- 3.1.2 A pledge to use force only to protect oneself or others from immediate danger of death or injury or to restore order, but only when other methods of compliance have failed or time does not permit. The amount of force applied must be only that amount necessary to obtain compliance with the law or to restore order.
- 3.1.3 A pledge to respect and obey the lawful orders of their superiors and to acknowledge a responsibility for improving the safety and security of the communities they are assigned to protect.
- 3.1.4 Offices must be prepared to commit themselves to be judicious in their personal conduct and to refrain from activities that could bring either the officer or the agency into public disrepute.
- 3.1.5 A documented failure to comply with the code of ethics shall constitute the offense of "conduct unbecoming"

3.2 All police agencies have an obligation to conduct thorough and competent background investigations into all those seeking to serve as police officers. These investigations shall identify and examine any issues in a candidate's background that relates to the following:

- 3.2.1 Any history of violence or aggression (arrests, restraining orders)
- 3.2.2 Any evidence of untreated substance abuse or addiction
- 3.2.3 Any evidence related to personal honesty and trustworthiness involving such issues as theft, fraud, unreliability in work assignments
- 3.2.4 Any evidence of sexual abuse or predatory sexual conduct involving force or violence or involvement with underaged persons and stalking.
- 3.2.5 Any evidence of mental or emotional instability

- 3.2.6 The chief shall appoint a senior leadership review committee to examine the findings of all background investigations and to make final recommendations to the chief regarding police officer appointments.
- 3.3 All officers who seek appointments to detective units, special service units or promotion must also undergo internal agency screening to include:
- 3.3.1 Any past or current affiliation or association with criminals
 - 3.3.2 The submission of a complete financial disclosure statement
 - 3.3.3 A review of an officer's disciplinary record and complete personnel file including all complaint investigations despite outcomes.
A review of an officer's general performance record.
 - 3.3.4 A senior leadership team appointed by the Chief should have the responsibility and authority to review and recommend all transfers to detective or special service units with Chief having final approval.
- 3.4 Police agencies should not be utilized for regulatory enforcement in the areas of alcohol or other forms of controlled substance regulation, or for the regulation of gambling. Police agencies should retain their authority to exercise enforcement of all laws, but day to day regulation of certain activities should be conducted by separate agencies under separate regulatory authority and oversight.
- 3.5 Whenever a member, a unit or a submit, from a police agency is detailed or assigned to an outside non-law enforcement agency, in which day to day operational control will be either formally or informally exercised by an outside host agency, there shall be an understanding that the authority of the police agency continues and supersedes that of the host.
- 3.5.1 The police agency's chain of command shall not be broken. When law enforcement agencies pool resources to form task forces, a memorandum of understanding must be drafted and agreed to by all participating agencies, which shall specify the command and control requirements of the task force, the standards for conduct and performance of the members, the operating protocols to include use of force and a clear designation of responsibility for actions taken by the task force.
 - 3.5.2 The agencies senior leadership must regularly assert its authority over all members or units Assigned to outside agencies, to reiterate its authority and responsibility for the personnel assigned.
- 3.6 Police officers shall be circumspect in their off duty relationships. Officers shall not maintain associations with any person(s) suspected by their agency of being engaged in criminal activity except pursuant to official duty:
- 3.6.1 A notification by an authorized representative of a police agency to a member that the member is associating with such a person(s) shall serve as a warning for them to discontinue such association.
 - 3.6.2 This shall not preclude associations between family members, who have been identified in any official agency notification. In such cases the officer must file a disclosure report with their agency for every encounter the officers has with a relative or in-law, who is the subject of concern.
 - 3.6.3 This information shall be considered criminal intelligence, confidential and not subject to public disclosure, unless by virtue of legal action.
- 3.7 Senior police leadership must be constantly aware of the possibility of systemic corruption within their agency, whenever an individual case of corruption is discovered, corruption should never be assumed to be isolated. A full investigation into the extent of the condition must be conducted and findings documented
- 3.7.1 The starting point for any anti-corruption effort is a statement by the head of the agency that corrupt practices will not be tolerated. These practices would include, but are not limited to, issues involved self-dealing, quid pro quo arrangements or activities that undermine department policy or the law. This shall include outright bribery.

3.7.2 Truthfulness must be asserted as an agency value. It should be supported by a zero tolerance policy with regard to deliberate, willful falsification of court testimony, other official public testimony, official reports and responses to official agency inquiries related to internal investigations. Officers found offering false testimony or information in these matters should be terminated.

3.7.3 Agency's must prohibit the practice of officers receiving gratuities in the form of goods or services from the general public or as expressions of gratitude for personal services rendered to individual members of the public. An agency should establish a process whereby expressions of gratitude from members for services rendered in individual cases can be done with agency oversight and approval.

3.8 An agency must maintain an ongoing audit and inspection program that routinely and scrupulously examines the effectiveness and integrity of established administrative safeguards utilized to document critical operational transactions. These transactions would include the following:

3.8.1 All records relating to the custody of private property in the agency's possession, to include: all property seized as evidence in criminal proceedings; records relating to the administration of grant money and records relating to the proper care and use of agency property.

3.8.2 All official reports relating to arrests, prisoner bookings, search warrant affidavits, incident reports, activity reports regularly filed by officers; as well, personnel evaluation reports submitted by supervisors concerning the performance of their subordinates along with after action reviews.

3.8.3 All civilian complaint reports to ensure that they were received, that action was taken and that disposition on each complaint were in accord with agency policy.

3.8.4 Audit schedules should be established and strictly adhered to.

3.9 Each agency must address the need to maintain a professional standards authority. In large agencies this can be assigned to a special unit, in smaller agencies a senior leader should be tasked with this duty. The mission of agency's professional standards authority is to investigate all allegations or information relating to unprofessional practices within an agency, particularly those relating to systemic corruption.

3.9.1 The Professional Standards authority must observe strict protocols relating to internal security and should report directly to the chief of the agency.

3.9.2 The professional standards authority would maintain direct liaisons with state and federal prosecutors and assist in any criminal investigations relating to internal matters within the agency.