

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**As part of its comprehensive look at our justice system, the  
Access to Justice Fairness Committee and police organizations  
launch joint survey on policing to further mutual understanding**

As part of its continuing, comprehensive review of Delaware's criminal justice system, the Access to Justice Committee on Fairness has joined with the Delaware Police Chiefs' Council and the Fraternal Order of Police, to launch a wide-ranging survey on policing in Delaware.

The survey is part of an ongoing effort to ensure that the state's criminal justice system works as fairly and efficiently as possible for all Delawareans. That comprehensive look has, among other things, involved: a) taking a deep look at our state's problem-solving courts and undertaking efforts to make them more effective; b) proposing important reforms to our system of pretrial supervision to reduce the toll of monetary bail on low-risk offenders; c) supporting the General Assembly's call to rationalize and improve the clarity, fairness, and proportionality of our criminal code; d) developing a systematic approach to institutionalizing training for personnel in the criminal justice system to reduce the effects of implicit bias on decriminalization in the criminal court system; and e) examining ways to make the judicial system more accessible to ordinary citizens and more convenient for key constituents like police, correctional officers, witnesses, prosecutors, defense counsel, and jurors.

As part of that work, the Fairness Committee considers it vital to gather input from the public and experts, and has thus undertaken public hearings, solicitations for comment from key policymakers and academics, and used other tools to ensure that those the justice system serves have a chance to be heard. For example, in 2015, the Judiciary commissioned a deep examination of its effectiveness. Using the rich information base they received from a combination of confidential interviews of key constituents and a broad public survey, the American College of Trial Lawyers and the Delaware State Bar Association made important recommendations about how our Judiciary could serve the public more fairly, efficiently, and expertly. Likewise, the Access to Justice Commission has been deploying leading academics to do rigorous research of available data to guide its efforts in improving our criminal justice system. A recent example of that was the study, "Evaluating the Role of Race in Criminal Justice Adjudications in Delaware," done by John M. MacDonald, Ph.D., and Ellen A. Donnelly, Ph.D.

The survey launched today is part of that ongoing effort to examine all key components of our justice system and to better understand how both those who serve the public and the public itself feel about critical issues. The survey is designed to elicit comments from three groups – police officers, probation officers and members of the public. The survey focuses on issues such as mutual understanding between law enforcement and the communities they serve, the quality of life and working conditions of law enforcement officers, and the level of satisfaction and trust communities have with their police forces.

The survey was developed with input from Professor MacDonald and other respected scholars and members of the Fairness Committee including members of law enforcement and key community leaders. The results of the survey will be used to identify important issues that should be the focus of substantive examination and further empirical work to be commissioned by the Fairness Committee and the Chiefs' Council going forward.

The Fairness Committee was founded to examine the causes of the disparity between the percentage of Delawareans who are black and the percentage of those incarcerated in Delaware's prisons who are black, and to recommend measures to ensure that this disparity does not result from racial discrimination.

To ensure as much input as possible, the law enforcement organizations and the Fairness Committee have worked together with the Administrative Office of the Courts to make the survey available to every police officer in Delaware through law enforcement organizations, and the Chiefs' Council is strongly encouraging participation among its members. Likewise, Commissioner Perry Phelps of the Department of Correction is encouraging input from all of the probation and parole officers. The goal is to make sure that all members of law enforcement have a chance to be heard on the issues relevant to their important role in protecting the public and the quality of life they have as officers.

As important, the Fairness Committee and Chiefs' Council have worked together to develop as broad a list as possible of community organizations such as neighborhood associations, non-profits, civic organizations, and churches within all the communities in Delaware and will be reaching out to those groups to encourage them to urge their members and neighbors to respond to the survey. The public survey is available online – both in English and Spanish – at the Delaware Courts' Access to Justice website (<http://courts.delaware.gov/supreme/access.aspx>), and all Delawareans are invited and encouraged to participate.

“Delaware law enforcement cares deeply about those we serve, and about the patrol officers who are the primary point of contact with the public and the first responders to potential criminal conduct. By listening to the public and our officers, we hope to do an even better job of serving the people of Delaware. Listening is important, and we are optimistic that this input will help us identify common ground that we should use as a foundation to improve public safety and the relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.” – Chief William Bryson, Chairman of the Delaware Police Chiefs' Council Inc.

“Our hard working, and caring, probation and parole officers welcome this chance to hear from the public they serve and they are also looking forward to having input – through this survey – on the important work they do. We look forward to hearing from our officers and our communities on ways we can work together to make our neighborhoods safer and help our officers do the difficult job of protecting our citizens.” – Commissioner Perry Phelps of the Department of Correction.

“The Fraternal Order of Police is supportive of the survey and believes it will help bridge a better relationship between the citizens of Delaware and the law enforcement community.” – Delaware Fraternal Order of Police President Fred Calhoun.

“There are important issues of trust that need to be faced if we are to make progress in forging better relations among all communities. By actively seeking out the views of community members and law enforcement about these key issues and taking seriously what they say, we are taking an important step in forging a basis to increase mutual understanding. I applaud the Chiefs’ Council and police unions for taking this important step.” – Charles A. Madden, former Executive Director of the Hope Commission, Executive Vice President with Connections CSP, Inc. and member of the Fairness Committee.

“As a former long-time prosecutor, I know how vital it is to keeping the public safe to have our law enforcement officers and the communities they serve trust each other and work together. The willingness of our police community to reach out and seek input from the officers closest to the community and from the community itself should be applauded and will give us valuable information about how to make our state safer and improve police and community relations,” – Former U.S. Attorney for Delaware Colm F. Connolly, chair of the Fairness Committee’s Policing Strategies Subcommittee.

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