



TOWN OF DOUGLAS

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David P. Cortese – Vice Chairman
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Harold R. Davis
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September 3, 2020

Mr. Geoffrey Beckwith, Executive Director & CEO
MMA Executive Director's office
Massachusetts Municipal Association
One Winthrop Square
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Mr. Beckwith,

We write to underscore our disappointment with the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) position on so-called police reform legislation, known as H. 4860, as distributed on July 22, 2020.

We agree with the sentiment that government leadership, especially at the local level where law enforcement occurs and is managed directly by elected and appointed officials, must address the ongoing, longstanding impact of racism. We affirm our commitment to the core principles of due process, equal opportunity and protection under the law, and all of the various freedoms and protections established by the Constitution, interpreted by our courts and implemented every day by dedicated public servants. Any statement made by any municipal organization of which Douglas is a member to this effect would enjoy our unqualified support.

The matter at hand, however, is support for a specific piece of legislation. In this instance, our expectation for an organization that advocates for us is that it will analyze carefully the details of the proposed language. We expect you to decline to commit one way or the other if any part of a legislative package would have significant, negative impact on municipal government, unless a broad-based consensus emerges as the result of extensive membership conversation on the topic.

In our view, you had an obligation to arrive at your assessment of the bill's language on qualified immunity and bring it to the policymaking bodies of the municipalities you represent to gauge our level of concern in response to the proposal as drafted. We have specific concerns regarding the costs of our liability insurance, our ability to promote and recruit employees, and the impact on the integrity of any enforcement effort by local government if sweeping changes are made to qualified immunity.

The decision of the executive board, or any other subset of the MMA, to proceed with "strong support" for "landmark legislation" without more extensive interaction with your membership represents an egregious breach of faith. We

expect the MMA to remain nonpartisan. That is what we sign up for when the Town pays dues into the organization. You have waded prematurely into support for a measure that we believe has significant risks for us in terms of cost and the quality of services we deliver.

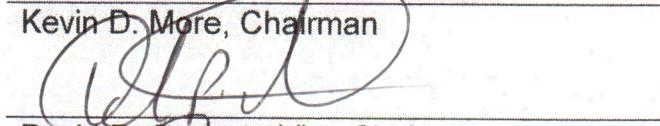
We recognize the indirect path so-called "police reform" will take before becoming law. Please keep us informed in timely fashion on the various twists and turns. We expect that you will have the integrity to represent to all parties in the State House that on the issue of qualified immunity, your membership does not uniformly believe that the benefits of the rest of the bill outweigh the potential costs of that one aspect of the measure.

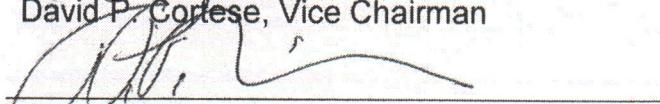
Thank you for your understanding and anticipated compliance.

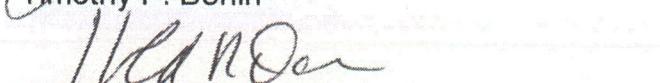
Respectfully,

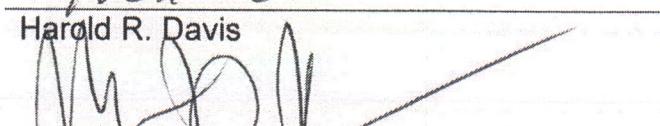
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