



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

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May 22, 2018

The Honorable Shirley Weber
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3123
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 931 (Weber) — Support

Dear Assemblymember Weber:

Youth ALIVE! is pleased to support your AB 931, which will protect community members by allowing law enforcement to use deadly force only when it is necessary to prevent imminent death or serious bodily injury.

Youth ALIVE! is a violence prevention and intervention organization that helps young people become leaders and advocates for the change they would like to see in their communities through our Teens on Target Program, mentors and supports healing for young people who have been violently injured through our Caught in the Crossfire program, and works with families grieving in the wake of a homicide through our Khadafy Washington Project.

California needs to change the rules for when police can use deadly force. Under current law, police can use deadly force whenever an “objectively reasonable” officer would have done so under the same circumstances, whether or not there was an immediate threat to life or bodily security, or whether there were available alternatives.¹ As a result, current law authorizes police to kill when it is not necessary, widening the rift between grieving communities – particularly communities of color – and the law enforcement agencies that are supposed to protect them.

In line with recommendations from policing and legal experts,² AB 931 changes California law so that police can use deadly force only when necessary, and requires them to use tactics to de-escalate a situation or use alternatives to deadly force where reasonable. Changing this standard will mean that officers will be trained to use deadly force less often, and it will be easier to hold officers accountable when they shoot and kill unnecessarily.

¹ See *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).

² See, e.g., Police Executive Research Forum, *Use of Force: Taking Policing to a Higher Standard*, 30 Guiding Principles (Jan. 29, 2016); Police Executive Research Forum, *An Integrated Approach to De-Escalation and Minimizing Use of Force* (Aug. 2012); American Law Institute, *Principles of Policing, Draft on Use of Force* (2016).

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The harm from police killings extends beyond the lives lost and impacts all involved. Police shootings cause extraordinary trauma for the families and communities impacted – trauma that disproportionately impacts communities of color. Studies show that police departments with more restrictive use of force policies not only have fewer shootings by police, but also lower rates of assaults against officers and lower crime rates.³ One of the Legislature’s primary goals is to protect public safety, and safeguarding Californians’ right to be safe from unnecessary deaths by law enforcement is a critical step in that direction. Youth ALIVE! strongly supports the enactment of AB 931.

Sincerely,



Anne Marks

cc: Members, Senate Committee on Public Safety

³ Sinyangwe, S., *Examining the Role of Use of Force Policies in Ending Police Violence*, Campaign Zero (2016).