



**Testimony for the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Codes
Public Hearing: Policing (S3695)**

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October 17, 2019

Good morning Chair Bailey and members of the Senate Standing Committee on Codes. My name is Quadira Coles and I am the Policy Manager at Girls for Gender Equity (GGE). Thank you for holding this important hearing on policing transparency and for the opportunity to speak today.

GGE is an intergenerational, advocacy, and youth development organization that is committed to the physical, psychological, social, and economic development of girls and women. GGE is committed to challenging structural forces, including racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and economic inequality, which constrict the freedom, full expression, and rights of trans and cis girls and young women of color, and gender non-conforming youth.

We are also proud members and leaders of a number of coalitions and joint campaigns that advance our work – pertinent to today’s hearing, the Dignity in Schools Campaign, the Sexuality Education Alliance of New York, and Communities United for Police Reform.

We work daily with young women and TGNC youth of color who are policed at every juncture of their lives: on the way to and from school by NYPD officers, in school by NYPD School Safety Agents and police, while accessing city services, or simply being in public space. Young women and TGNC young people are criminalized for everyday behavior, oftentimes hyper-sexualized due to historically located racialized and gender-based stereotypes, and they are regularly policed because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

As an organization that has worked to address gender-based violence for over 16 years, we understand that acts of gender-based violence are often patterned and repetitive. Frequently, sexual harassment and sexual assault are not a one time or isolated incident. Further, survivors who report sexual misconduct by police officers are met by a disciplinary system that benefits from hiding misconduct – especially repeated misconduct – from the public eye. This secrecy unnecessarily causes undue onus on survivors of all police misconduct, including families who have lost loved ones to police violence.

While there is little transparency on the full scope or prevalence of police sexual misconduct, research indicates that police officers sexually harass and assault women and girls with alarming frequency.¹ As one example, analysis of a New York City youth survey conducted by the CUNY Graduate Center found that 40% of the young women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment by police officers, and LGB youth were twice as likely to have experienced negative sexual contact with police.² This latter point is supported by the CCRB’s own evaluation of LGBTQ-related complaints that found members of the LGBTQ community experience misconduct due to their sexual orientation or gender expression and officers may make enforcement decisions based on homophobic and transphobic biases and intolerance.³ These findings mirror the concerns and lived experiences of the young people with which GGE works.

In 2018, BuzzFeed exposed the fact that hundreds of officers were allowed to keep their jobs after committing egregious offenses. These offenses included lying under oath to grand juries and District Attorneys, and lying in official reports, physically attacking people and other excessive force, and sexual misconduct, including in schools.

The database shows 206 cases involving a School Safety Agent (SSA) or representative of the School Safety Division of the NYPD. Substantiated charges included 52 instances of physical contact with students, including “acted inappropriately with a student,” “unnecessary and excessive force against a student,” “wrongly searched a student and made them disrobe,” and “dragged a student by the arm” – all responded to with the forfeiture of vacation days. Further, of those 206 cases, an average of 391 days passed between the date of the charges and the date of the disposition.

¹ Andrea J. Ritchie & Delores Jones-Brown (2017) Policing Race, Gender, and Sex: A Review of Law Enforcement Policies, *Women & Criminal Justice*, 27:1, 21-50, DOI: 10.1080/08974454.2016.1259599

² Brett G. Stoudt, Michelle Fine, & Madeline Fox (2011) Growing Up Policed in the Age of Aggressive Policing Policies, 56 *N.Y.L. Sch. L. Rev.* 1331; Michelle Fine, Nicholas Freudenberg, Yasser Payne, Tiffany Perkins, Kersha Smith, & Katya Wanzer (2003) “Anything can happen with police around”: Urban youth evaluate strategies of surveillance in public places. *Journal of Social Issues* 59:141-58.

³ Civilian Complaint Review Board (2016) *Pride, Prejudice and Policing: An Evaluation of LGBTQ-Related Complaints from January 2010 through December 2015*. New York, NY: Author.

Greater transparency around the history of police disciplinary records through the repeal of 50-a and passage of S3695 would be a significant step in ensuring that officers who harm community members are held accountable and simultaneously advancing safe and supportive schools.

The full repeal of the law is necessary to advance true community safety for girls and TGNC youth of color in New York. We again thank the New York State Senate Committee on Codes for holding this hearing. If you have any questions, please contact us.

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