

WASHINGTON COALITION FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY
Families, Communities, and Partners for Safety and Dignity
Police Officer Accountability Act
HB 1202

Who We Are:

The WCPA centers families and communities impacted by police violence. Members include families who have lost loved ones to police use of deadly force, I-940 campaign leaders, civil rights organizations, Tribes, labor unions, the faith community, and activists committed to ending the violence present in police culture and practices.

What We Believe:

- Police hold state-sanctioned power over life and death. They can de-escalate crises rather than escalate them. They can treat those they suspect of committing crimes with dignity, and stabilize dangerous situations safely and humanely. Every person's life is sacred, and police must be held accountable for unnecessary violence.
- More than two years have passed since I-940's passage, yet unnecessary police injuries and killings of community members continue unabated. Stronger measures are required to motivate police officers and their employers to stop the violence.
- Directly impacted families and community members must have a significant place at the table in addressing police accountability so that their lived experiences inform the development of policy.

Peace Officer Accountability Act:

Existing avenues for holding police officers civilly liable when they violate a person's rights or harm someone pose significant barriers to accountability. When a police officer harms someone without facing consequences, there is no justice for victims of police violence, no incentive to change bad behavior, community trust is eroded, and it makes everyone less safe. Police misconduct in black and brown communities has resulted in significant trauma and injustice in Washington and across the country. Reforms are critically needed so that police departments and officers have to pay for wrongfully harming people and have an incentive to prevent bad conduct in the future. This bill:

- **Holds officers accountable** by creating an additional way to pursue legal action for people harmed by police misconduct. Individuals can bring a civil lawsuit for misconduct including certain constitutional violations, torts, and violations of state law.
- **Holds police departments accountable** by holding them liable for negligent hiring, training, supervising, and disciplining officers involved in misconduct.
- **Improves access to justice** by allowing attorney fee and cost recovery if the victim is successful and wins their lawsuit against the police.
- **Authorizes the Attorney General's office** to investigate and bring suit for the above violations, promoting fair police practices across Washington.
- **Removes obstacles to civil liability** such as qualified immunity, which has undermined justice for even the most egregious acts of misconduct.

We believe that this bill will deter future police unlawfulness and, when such abuse occurs, increase the chances that its victims are compensated for the harms suffered. It will make our communities safer.