

# For Immediate Release



## **Greenwood Village Official Statement Regarding City's Commitment to Indemnify its Police Officers Against Liability Under Senate Bill 20-217**

First and foremost, to claims that we have shielded our police from accountability, nothing could be further from the truth. As with any inappropriate conduct, we have retained the right to discipline including termination of an officer from his or her position understanding that they will never be able to get a job again in the profession to which many have devoted their lives. They still are subject to criminal liability and jail as a consequence of their actions. However based on our workforce, training and culture that have existed for a long time in our City, we do not believe that the added potential punishment of \$25,000 judgment will affect their actions one way or another in those few seconds of crisis when officers have to make split second life or death decisions.

We in Greenwood Village believe that it is an essential duty to our citizens and visitors that their persons and property will be safe in our community. If as a community, we cannot secure our citizens safety, we have failed in our basic governmental duty. We in Greenwood Village did not wait for the events that occurred in Minneapolis to examine our procedures and policies to develop professional practices that create the appropriate balance between asking our police officers to protect our citizens lives and property and putting themselves at personal physical risk while protecting the civil rights and diminishing potential harm to individuals who have interactions with our police often under stressful circumstances.

Many of the items that the state legislature included in SB 20-217 have been in force for a long period of time in Greenwood Village. We already ban choke holds. We review every show of and use of force case not only when deadly force is used or there is a complaint but when any force is used even including situations where a taser may be drawn and not even fired. We do not chase unless the chase involves a felony and immediate threat to human life that outweighs the greater risk to the community. We have had dash cameras for 20 years.

We have developed a culture over years of intense professional management and training where officers will intervene should they consider a fellow officer to have engaged in excessive force and have no problem with reporting that activity through the chain of command. We provide 300 hours of training each year to enforce and reinforce professional policies including the minimal use of force, community policing and respect for everyone that they encounter. We hire only those individuals who already accept the professional principles that are part of our culture.

More...

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Incurring a financial penalty decided by a City Council potentially influenced by media and passions of the day is a far greater risk than many of our police officers are willing to take. Seeing the lack of reasoned support by city councils throughout the country, one senior officer has already determined that this risk in addition to his life was not one that he was willing to endure. Other officers who are also risking their lives on a day to day basis seeing municipalities who want to defund their efforts calls into question for them whether it is really worth protecting people who don't want them.

Other municipalities may have a different cultures, training and problems that we do not face. We will not judge the efforts of other cities to do what they believe best for their citizens, but based on our workforce, our training and our culture, we do not believe that the potential financial penalties of our police officers in Greenwood Village will make any measurable difference in whether they will act in a professional or criminal way. However, the principle behind such penalties can destroy the will of our officers to serve the people that they have sworn to protect. We have sworn to protect our citizens from harm from those who would do them ill. It would not be in the public interest to create a system that contributes to the loss of good officers or diminish the ability to attract the best candidates to do a very necessary and dangerous job.

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