

SB 178- Favorable

Dear Chairman, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Greta Willis, mother of Kevin L. Cooper. I am also a volunteer with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and the co-founder of the Kevin L. Cooper Foundation created in my son's name.

On Saturday, August 12th, 2006, my 15-year-old son was shot and killed by an inexperienced Baltimore City police officer with one year on the force. My son was experiencing a mental health crisis. I called the police seeking help for Kevin. Instead of receiving help, Kevin, while holding a plastic dustpan, was maced and shot in my home in front of me as I was holding my 10-month-old granddaughter. Two officers initially responded but one officer left stating "the call was abated", meaning it was over. The other officer stayed and antagonized Kevin, then shot and killed him. Think: If the officer was in danger, why did his partner leave him, a rookie, on the scene alone?

That one officer became the judge, the jury, and executioner of Kevin's life. There were no criminal charges placed against the officer. During the hearing, my family was offered \$10,000 to settle the case. We refused. There is no police accountability in the Baltimore City Police Department, even now. If the department would have investigated our case a little further instead of covering up and declaring on the same day of the shooting that it was a justifiable homicide... Please explain to me: How can you justify a homicide that just occurred at 9:30 a.m. that same day? Impossible. Why? Where is the investigation? Where is the transparency? And, where is accountability?

I urge you all to make police accountability your number one priority to save the lives of our children. Police violence is gun violence. And, we cannot end gun violence without addressing the crisis.

Thank you for your time and I urge the committee to vote and make changes. We need police reform and accountability now. Thank you very much and have a wonderful day.

Greta Willis
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