

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

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August 10, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

The recent actions of the Virginia Parole Board, as well as the release of a dangerous criminal who subsequently murdered his accuser, prompt me to write once again with grave concerns regarding law and order in the Commonwealth.

According to the Inspector General's report, the Parole Board violated state law and their own policies and procedures by releasing Vincent Martin, the convicted killer of Richmond Police Patrolman Michael Connors. The Parole Board must be held accountable. I call on you to correct this outrageous failure and return Mr. Martin to custody immediately so the parole process may begin again, this time with proper adherence to the Code of Virginia and Parole Board policies.

Unfortunately, the actions of the Parole Board reveal a pervasive anti-police attitude that continues to be promulgated by your administration; an attitude which, I believe, is leading Virginians down a perilous path. I am deeply troubled by the persistent erosion of justice and lack of respect for law and order by your office.

The Coronavirus pandemic has enabled the release of dangerous felons back to our streets, allowing them to commit new and horrific crimes. Just this past week in Northern Virginia, Ibrahim Bouaichi, who was indicted on charges including rape, strangulation, and abduction and jailed without bond, was released despite objections from prosecutors. He went on to kill the woman who had accused him. This is an abysmal failure of your social justice policies and reflects a total disregard for the safety, security, and rights of the victim.

Next week the House and Senate will convene for special session. Under the guise of "police reform" the General Assembly is bracing for legislation to defund police operational budgets, remove police officers from our schools, lessen the penalties for assaulting law enforcement officers, and more. What we actually need is legislation that will better equip and develop our law enforcement officers, not bills that will weaken the abilities of those who protect and serve.

As the Senator representing Virginia Beach—the largest city in the Commonwealth—I fully support Virginia's public safety officers and reject any misguided efforts to undermine their effectiveness.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill DeSteph".

Bill DeSteph