

Statement Condemning the Columbus Police Department and to Demand that The Ohio State University Immediately Cut Ties with the Columbus Police Department

President Kristina Johnson, Senior Vice President Jay Kasey, and Director of Public Safety, Monica Moll

A week ago today, on Tuesday, April 20th, 2021, an officer in the Columbus Police Department (CPD) brutally murdered Ma'Khia Bryant, a 16-year-old Black girl, minutes after the verdict of the Derek Chauvin trial was released. Ma'Khia was a child whose safety was in danger and, after calling the police for help, she was shot and killed. There is no justification for CPD officers to respond to Ma'Khia's call for help by killing her. We, the Undergraduate Student Government, Ohio Union Activities Board, and leaders of three of the largest undergraduate student organizations on campus at The Ohio State University, firmly condemn the Columbus Police Department, the University's ties with CPD, and the complacency of our university leaders in not addressing students' calls to cut ties with CPD. We send our condolences to Ma'Khia's family and loved ones and ask that their wishes and privacy are respected during this time of mourning, trauma, and intense public exposure. Additionally, we extend our sympathies and solidarity to the Columbus' Black Community and the Columbus Community at large in their mourning. Although recording is a useful tool for holding police accountable, we ask that individuals refrain from sharing or posting videos of Ma'Khia's death due to its extremely harmful and traumatizing nature for all viewers, especially Black viewers.

The institution of the Columbus Police Department functions to perpetuate violence upon the Black community instead of safety. The Columbus Police Department has one of the highest rates in the nation for the killings of unarmed Black individuals more than almost any police force in the nation, at a rate of nearly 92 deaths per every 1 million Black citizens.¹ This statistic was cited last year in the statement shared by all three of Ohio State's student governments— Interprofessional Council (IPC), Council of Graduate Students (CGS), and Undergraduate Student Government (USG) – titled “Statement on the injustices against the Black Community and Columbus Protestors by the Columbus Police Department.”² University officials continue to ignore calls by Ohio State University stakeholders to condemn and sever ties with CPD for perpetuating anti-Black violence. In less than six months, CPD has taken the lives of Casey Goodson Jr., Andre Hill, Miles Jackson, and now, Ma'Khia Bryant. This is in stark contrast to Saturday, April 17th, when CPD deliberately failed to intervene as “Chitt Fest” unfolded, despite being called to the scene – as mostly white students rioted, assaulted each other, destroyed property, and terrified the campus community. The stark contrast between the handling of a majority-white gathering compared to a sixteen-year-old Black girl calling for help demonstrates a racist disparity that is all too common for CPD.

As CPD actively continues to harm and fail to protect the Black community, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the university administration needs to cease its partnerships with CPD to protect all of its students. Nearly a year ago, the three student governments representing the entirety of the

¹ <https://columbusfreepress.com/article/columbus-number-one-police-killing-black-people>

² go.osu.edu/SU20Statement

student body of the university released an open letter that received over 20,000 signatures of support.³ Student leaders demanded divestment from CPD and investment in policing alternatives to protect the safety and wellbeing of the Black community at Ohio State.⁴ Yet still to this day, university administrators have not met the demands and addressed the concerns of students.

We will not tolerate the continuous anti-Black violence perpetuated by CPD and the institution of police forces as a whole throughout history. The presence of CPD in our campus community has endangered the safety and wellbeing of Black Buckeyes. Our university is supposed to be a home for all Buckeyes. Let us be clear: the continued partnership – including sharing information and resources, as well as financial support – between the university and CPD directly hurts and perpetuates harm against Black students on this campus. We call upon university leaders to meet the demands of students. We specifically call on President Kristina Johnson, President of The Ohio State University; Jay Kasey, Senior Vice President of Administration and Planning; and Monica Moll, Director of Public Safety. As Senior Vice President of Administration and Planning, Jay Kasey oversees strategic planning, capital strategies, and all routine operations at the university, including but not limited to maintenance, security, construction, and parking. Monica Moll's role as Director of Public Safety is responsible for the direction of The Ohio State University's Police Division and central campus security services, amongst other responsibilities. We call upon these university leaders to address the harmful relationship between OSU and CPD. We call upon our university leaders to condemn CPD and to take action to create an Ohio State conducive to the wellbeing of Black Buckeyes.

We believe this letter, as well as the joint statement released last summer – which garnered over 20,000 signatures of support from members of both the Ohio State and Columbus community – have made our position clear. We call upon our university to immediately cease all contractual relationships with the Columbus Police Department and instead invest in alternatives that center the wellbeing and safety of Black students at Ohio State. None of the demands that we are addressing and none of the harm we are acknowledging in this statement are new; advocacy led by student leaders has been happening for years, and action is long overdue on the part of The Ohio State University.

We again demand that:

1. The Ohio State University Police Department (OSUPD) immediately ceases contractual agreements with Columbus Police Department for any and all on-campus investigations, services, and events.
2. The Ohio State University lobbies the City of Columbus to implement alternatives to policing as methods to conduct traffic control stops and to be hired for campus events and football games.
3. The Ohio State University immediately ceases Mutual Aid service contracts with the Columbus Police Department and identifies OSU resources to restrict the presence of CPD in off-campus areas.
4. The Ohio State University no longer accepts federal, military-grade resources, and reduces OSUPD's budget for expenditures that may be used for further militarization. Instead, reallocate the funds into student support units, such as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Student Life Multicultural Center, Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services, and/or the Student Life Student Wellness Center.
5. The OSU Department of Public Safety releases an action plan, devised with student input, that affirms the commitment to Black student safety and overall university safety through disarmed, anti-force, and culturally competent practices.

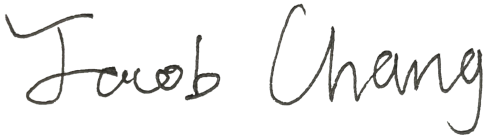
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6. The Ohio State University publicly acknowledges and condemns the systemic issue of anti-Black violence perpetuated by the Columbus Police Department

In solidarity,

Senior Staff of the Undergraduate Student Government

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacob Chang". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large 'J' and 'C'.

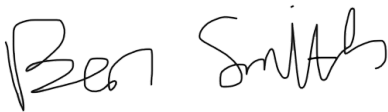
Jacob Chang (he/him)

President of the Undergraduate Student Body

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Valerius". The signature is cursive, with a large 'A' and 'V'.

Anna Valerius (she/her)

Vice President of the Undergraduate Student Body

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Smith". The signature is cursive, with a large 'B' and 'S'.

Ben Smith (he/him)

President of BuckeyeThon

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Montenegro". The signature is cursive, with a large 'E' and 'M'.

Emily Montenegro (she/her)

President of the Ohio Union Activities Board