Black Lawyers of Ventura County (BLVC) condemns police brutality, the continued violence against our Black brothers and sisters, the over-policing of communities of color and all systems of oppression that have plagued the United States of America for far too long. We are deeply saddened and disturbed by the recent deaths of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and the tragic deaths of many other unarmed black men, women and children throughout this nation.

Consistent with our mission to represent and empower marginalized groups, BLVC is uniquely situated to help bring about change through civic involvement and legal action. The time for change is long overdue.

Black Lives Matter.

This is our call to action. BLVC calls on its members, allies and elected officials to take action and support the Black Lives Matter Movement. We all have a right to equal protection under law. We all must have equal access to justice.

We want to work with our community, public agencies and elected officials to bring about sustainable and systemic change throughout Ventura County. Therefore, we propose the following:

(1) All law enforcement agencies within Ventura County shall join the dozens of cities and counties across the nation in adopting the immediate harm reduction policies of the #8CANTWAIT campaign (https://8cantwait.org). These 8 policies include banning chokeholds and strangleholds; requiring de-escalation; requiring warning before shooting; requiring the exhaustion of all alternatives before shooting; instituting a duty to intervene and stop excessive force by other officers; banning shooting at moving vehicles; requiring the use of force continuum; and requiring comprehensive reporting. We commend the Ventura County Sheriff’s Department, City of Ventura, the City of Oxnard and the City of Simi Valley for already implementing some
of these policies. In fact, it is currently our understanding that the Sheriff’s Department and Simi Valley Police Department have already instituted bans on carotid holds. We urge all local law enforcement agencies to take immediate steps to adopt all 8 policies by August 15, 2020.

(2) Ventura County Board of Supervisors shall convene a multiracial, multigenerational, gender diverse, nonpartisan commission to provide civilian oversight of all local police departments, law enforcement agencies and public agencies. The commission will independently review and investigate complaints of racial bias, racial profiling, disparate treatment, excessive use of force and violence. The commission’s review and approval will be required for all departmental policies, including hiring practices and training requirements. The commission shall maintain statistics and publish biannual reports. The commission shall have the authority to implement its recommendations, and to enjoin unlawful policies, practices and procedures from continuing.

(3) All public schools within Ventura County shall make Black history a requirement in primary education curriculum. The material must cover, among other things, pre-slavery, slavery, the Civil War and reconstruction, redlining policies, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement and demonstrate how historical inequities continue to persist today.

(4) Local, state and national legislative bodies shall implement national standards similar to those listed above herein and create a mandatory reporting protocol which will result in an independent investigation every time there is a police involved shooting of an unarmed Black person or when a Black person is shot in the back by law enforcement.

These steps are more than reasonable. They are necessary strides in the direction of creating a truly equitable society and to prevent more tragedies from occurring. Implementing these proposals will ensure that the perpetrators of unlawful conduct are held accountable for their crimes. Too many lives have been lost and the price of continuing to fail to act is far too high.

Thank you in advance for your response, which is requested no later than September 1, 2020.

Respectfully,

Black Lawyers of Ventura County
Blacklawyersvc@gmail.com

In solidarity:

Ventura County Diversity Bar Alliance
Ventura County Asian American Bar Association
Women Lawyers of Ventura County
Barristers

BLVC is an inclusive and diverse organization that strives to have a positive impact on the legal and general community of Ventura County.