

March 24, 2021

To: Sheriff Jim Hammond

Hamilton County Sheriff's Office
600 Market Street, Suite G10
Chattanooga, TN 37402

From: Chattanooga Clergy for Justice

Dear Sheriff Hammond:

The Chattanooga Clergy for Justice, along with community organizers, community leaders, and legal counsel have identified ambiguous language in the 114-page document you provided that relates to HCSO use of force policy and procedure.

Based on national best practice standards on use of force, it is our contention the current HCSO use of force policies are too broad, giving deputies wide latitude to decide whether and how much force is appropriate and necessary. For example:

- The current use of force policy lists factors that a deputy *may* take into account when deciding whether to use force. Instead, the policy should *require* that officers take into account the subject's characteristics, such as their mental capacity, physical or developmental disability, the influence of drugs or alcohol, and/or language barriers.
- Additionally, the HCSO use of force policy should *require* the deputy's evaluations of the circumstances surrounding the encounter to be *reasonable*. *All* of the deputy's decisions leading up to the use of force must be *reasonable* as well.

Listed above are two specific examples of how current HCSO use of force policy can be improved to protect the civil rights of all Hamilton County citizens. Moving forward, Chattanooga Clergy for Justice, the U.S. Department of Justice, concerned citizens of Hamilton County, and our legal advisors will continue to work together on developing a plan of action. Once that plan of action is completed, will we release further findings and our demands at that time.

In the name of justice,

Chattanooga Clergy for Justice

cc: (via electronic mail)

Hamilton County Mayor Jim Coppinger
Hamilton County Board of Commissioners
Hamilton County District Attorney General Neil Pinkston
Hamilton County Chief Deputy Austin Garrett
Governor of Tennessee Bill Lee
TN Attorney General Herbert Reggie Smith