

Community Calls on County to Give Civilian Oversight Commission Subpoena Power

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Press Conference: Friday April 3rd, 500 W Temple St, 8:30 a.m.

Los Angeles, C.A. – There is a growing national conversation calling for independent civilian oversight of law enforcement agencies across the country. Existing oversight agencies argue that without subpoena power independent oversight is ineffective. The Coalition to End Sheriff Violence in Los Angeles Jails – which includes over 20 organizations countywide, survivors of sheriff violence, their families, and communities – have been calling on the county to create an independent civilian oversight commission *with* subpoena power.

On Friday the county-appointed working group charged with drafting the responsibilities, powers, and mission of the commission will be meeting to discuss subpoena power. The Coalition to End Sheriff Violence says that empowering the commission with the power to subpoena documents and testimony from the sheriff’s department as well as other county entities involved in custody conditions is a nonnegotiable. **In addition to subpoena power their demands are 1) that it be composed of 9 members, 5 appointed by the supervisors and 4 appointed from a list of nominees identified by the community, 2) it directs the functions of the Inspector General, 3) is comprised of no current or former law enforcement, 4) it has its own legal counsel.**

“This working group exists because the community fought for a legally empowered oversight commission that could subpoena the sheriff’s department,” says Mark-Anthony Johnson, director of health and wellness at Dignity and Power Now. “Law enforcement continues to violate our human rights because we have a legal structure that encourages that they operate with impunity. In order for the largest sheriff’s department in the country to be effectively investigated and held accountable the commission must have subpoena power. That means changing county charter. Today we call on those appointed to this working group to urge the county supervisors to initiate that process.”

Members of the community, including those formerly incarcerated, will be speaking on the importance of subpoena power at Friday’s press conference (500 W Temple St, 8:30 a.m.) and giving public comment to the working group (Room 347, 9 a.m.)

For more information, please visit dignityandpowernow.org.

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