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August 31st, 2021

Honorable Donna Stashyn
California Superior Court, Solano County
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: Vacaville Police Department Response to 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report Titled "Does Bias Infiltrate Solano County Law Enforcement?"

Dear Honorable Judge Stashyn:

Below you will find the responses from the Vacaville Police Department to the various findings and recommendations of the 2020-2021 Solano County Civil Grand Jury report titled: "*Does Bias Infiltrate Solano County Law Enforcement?*" received by me via email on June 25th, 2021.

FINDING 1 – The Solano County Civil Grand Jury found that local law enforcement agencies comply with the statutory requirements when providing training. However, bias training is only required and conducted every five years. Local law enforcement administrations agreed there is too much time between training sessions.

- **RESPONSE TO FINDING 1** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with FINDING 1.

RECOMMENDATION 1 – County law enforcement agencies adopt a more frequent schedule of diversity and bias training over and above the current five-year requirement.

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 1** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 1. The City of Vacaville has recently contracted with a local Equity/Diversity/Inclusion (EDI) firm to provide training city-wide and specifically within the Vacaville Police Department. A specific portion of this upcoming training focuses on bias and implied bias. In addition, the leadership within the department is committed to seeking out and implementing additional training opportunities that focus on bias, implicit bias, and EDI.

FINDING 2 – Most law enforcement administrations identified lack of adequate funding as an impairment to providing additional and/or more frequent training.

- **RESPONSE TO FINDING 2** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with FINDING 2.

RECOMMENDATION 2a – Law enforcement administrations seek increased funding for diversity and bias training.

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 2a** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 2a. The department will continue to seek out funding opportunities via grants and budget allocations in order to provide staff with additional EDI and bias training.

RECOMMENDATION 2b – *Collaborate with other local law enforcement agencies in providing diversity and bias training.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 2b** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 2b. The department will continuously seek out opportunities to partner and collaborate with other local law enforcement agencies in an effort to allow staff to attend additional training sessions on these important subjects in a more cost-effective manner.

FINDING 3 – *More under-represented people need to be represented in decision making roles.*

- **RESPONSE TO FINDING 3** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with FINDING 3.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – *Law enforcement agencies promote more under-represented people to decision making positions.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 3** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 3. The current leadership of the department recognizes the critical importance of having diversity amongst the decision-makers within the organization. The ability to promote under-represented staff to decision-making ranks begins with effective recruitment and retention of under-represented candidates/officers. The Vacaville Police Department has retained a consultant to conduct a comprehensive audit of the police department which will include an evaluation of the Department's recruitment and retention of employees. It is anticipated the audit will provide recommendations that will assist the Department in implementing additional strategies to increase the recruitment and retention of under-represented people to decision making positions. While the current demographic makeup of the department is similar to that of the City of Vacaville, we fully recognize the need and benefit of focused recruiting efforts toward those future law enforcement officer and leaders in under-represented groups.

FINDING 4 – *California Penal Code section 13651(a) states: "Every police department, sheriff's office, or other entity that employs peace officers shall review the job description that is used in the recruitment and hiring of those peace officers and shall make changes that emphasize community-based policing, familiarization between law enforcement and community residents, and collaborative problem solving, while de-emphasizing the paramilitary aspects of the job." All administrators mentioned the general population's lack of trust of law enforcement officers.*

- **RESPONSE TO FINDING 4** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with FINDING 4

RECOMMENDATION 4a – *Ensure that training de-emphasizes a paramilitary approach to policing.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 4a** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 4a. This department has focused on a community-based policing model for several decades with a focus on building relationships between our department and the community members we proudly serve. The common use of de-escalation techniques and our focus on Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) are just two examples of the department's commitment to engage in non-paramilitary tactics while serving the citizens of Vacaville.

RECOMMENDATION 4b – *Use a collaborative approach with community organizations to problem solve.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 4b** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 4b. Members of Vacaville PD are involved in numerous community organizations throughout the city and are constantly seeking to form new collaborative relationships all the time. Some examples are: The Youth Roundtable, Police Activities League (PAL), Vacaville Ministerial Association, Homeless Roundtable, Boys & Girls Club, and Leaven Kids. The department is committed to pursuing new and unique community organizations to partner with in order to problem-solve and to increase the quality of life in Vacaville. The comprehensive audit of the Vacaville Police Department mentioned in response 3 above will consist of significant outreach and listening sessions with community organizations to get an evaluation of the Department's transparency and public engagement policies, procedures, and practices. It is anticipated the audit findings will reinforce the current community collaboration and will provide recommendations that will assist the Department in implementing additional strategies increase collaboration with community organizations to problem solve.

FINDING 5 – *For some Law enforcement agencies employee turnover is an issue.*

- **RESPONSE TO FINDING 5** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with FINDING 5.

RECOMMENDATION 5b – *Law enforcement agencies find ways to achieve pay equity in the county to limit turn over in smaller communities. (RECOMMENDATION 5a was directed specifically to the Suisun City Police Department and, therefore, not addressed in this reply).*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 5b** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with the concept outlined in RECOMMENDATION 5b, however the department has limited control or input on the funding policies and pay equity of smaller agencies in Solano County. The Vacaville Police Department will continue to be a good partner with allied agencies and it committed to working collaboratively with other agencies in the County experiencing staffing difficulties.

FINDING 6 – *There are reports from the Federal Bureau of Investigation that extremist groups are infiltrating law enforcement agencies. While local law enforcement agencies investigate applicants as part of the vetting process, they rely on employee and citizen complaints to identify current staff social media postings for extremist ideology.*

- **RESPONSE TO FINDING 6** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with FINDING 6.

RECOMMENDATION 6a – *Solano County law enforcement agencies monitor social media postings by current staff for extremist content.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 6a** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 6a. All applicants and employees of the Vacaville Police Department undergo a rigorous and thorough background investigation, including a waiver allowing the background investigator access to their social media accounts to search for, among other disqualifying information, extremist content. Any evidence of membership, participation, or affiliation with the activities of extremist groups or ideologies would immediately disqualify an applicant from employment and result

in discipline, likely termination, for active employee. Each and every inquiry or complaint from the public related to an employee's social media content is comprehensively investigated by the Office of Professional Standards. However, while the Vacaville Police Department agrees that monitoring social media postings by current staff for extremist content is a beneficial practice, the Department does not currently have the staff, technology, and resources to actively monitor all the social media postings of 180 employees.

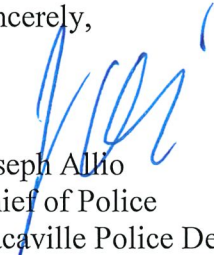
RECOMMENDATION 6b – *Law enforcement agency administrations keep up with the technology that their employees are using.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 6b** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 6b. The department has a Social Media Team which utilizes various platforms of social media to communicate with our citizens and beyond. Members of this team often present new technology to the team, including their commander, allowing us to keep up with changing trends.

RECOMMENDATION 6c – *Law enforcement agency administrations research and implement technology which assists in monitoring social media without violating first amendment rights.*

- **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 6c** – The Vacaville Police Department agrees with RECOMMENDATION 6c. While the First Amendment protects the freedom of speech, the department understands that members of law enforcement have certain restrictions regarding what they can post while representing their agency. These restrictions are clearly detailed in the department's Policy Manual under Policy 1058 – Employee Speech, Expression, and Social Networking. The Vacaville Police Department will research the availability and feasibility of technology which assists in monitoring social media without violating First Amendment rights. The Department fully investigates allegations brought forward by the community regarding any inappropriate content or extremist views posted on personnel's social media accounts.

Sincerely,



Joseph Allio
Chief of Police
Vacaville Police Department