



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND  
ECONOMIC JUSTICE  
*Serving Greater Boston Since 1968*

March 2, 2018

Delivered by First Class Mail

Governor Charles Baker  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Superintendent Colonel Richard McKeon  
Massachusetts State Police  
470 Worcester Road  
Framingham, MA 01702

**Re: Dangerous Racist Elements in the Massachusetts State Police**

Dear Governor Baker and Superintendent McKeon:

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice calls for the immediate termination of Massachusetts State Trooper Matthew Sheehan, the racist white officer with a long history of violent bigoted online posts who discharged a rifle against a group of unarmed people of color riding all-terrain vehicles in Boston this past weekend. To further promote safety, we also urge you to make a public commitment to implementing implicit bias and use of force training at the Massachusetts State Police.

It is critical that all law enforcement agencies – particularly those serving minority communities while severely lacking diversity on their force – have zero tolerance for racism and violent bigotry. Trooper Sheehan's disparaging remarks and encouragement of violence against minorities are particularly harmful for communities struggling to build trust with law enforcement. Tensions between law enforcement and communities of color undermine public safety by deterring victims of crimes from coming forward and witnesses from assisting with criminal investigations. Racially-charged language and discriminatory behavior discredit law enforcement and erode the ability to promote public safety. This past August, the Springfield Police Department appropriately fired an officer for similar insensitive Facebook comments about racial violence in Charlottesville, Virginia. *See Springfield Officer Who Wrote 'Hahahaha love this' After Charlottesville Fired*, BOSTON GLOBE (Dec. 2, 2017), available at <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/12/02/springfield-officer-who-wrote-hahaha-love-this-after-charlottesville-fired/mRbjbBLEpAVg7EXvGOLJ1H/story.html>. We urge you to follow Springfield's example and to immediately root out dangerous racist elements – starting with Trooper Sheehan – from your force.

Trooper Sheehan is a danger to the community. His history of inflammatory racist language and improper use of force pose a threat to public safety. There is no justification for discharging a rifle at unarmed people of color on a crowded freeway. Further, reports indicate that this is not his first offense, and that his personnel file contains numerous complaints, including at least one for excessive force. These circumstances amply demonstrate that the Massachusetts State Police needs to implement training on use of force and implicit bias. It also needs to improve diversity to ensure that it properly serves and represents the Commonwealth's diverse communities.

We further request that you fully comply with the investigation being conducted by the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office to determine whether criminal charges should be brought against Trooper Sheehan.

Finally, we demand that the Governor's Office and the Massachusetts State Police take immediate action against Trooper Sheehan and improve police training. We call on you to demonstrate to the Commonwealth that you value racial equity, the rule of law, and the lawful use of force. To that end, the Lawyers' Committee requests a meeting with you to discuss this public safety matter in greater detail.

Sincerely,

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cc: Suffolk County District Attorney Dan Conley