



Twin Cities Coalition for Justice for Jamar

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To: House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee

RE: HF 717 (Vang) - Civil statute of limitations extended for peace officer actions

TCC4J supports HF 717

The statute of limitations on wrongful death lawsuits against law enforcement encourages and rewards officials for delaying investigations and data requests for family members of victims of police violence.

Getting an attorney for a wrongful death lawsuit usually requires families to demonstrate they have a viable case. Showing there is a viable case requires information and investigation details released by the police departments, cities, counties, and the BCA.

We have repeatedly seen investigations dragged out unnecessarily for months or years by police departments and the BCA. While the investigations are in progress, the BCA and local officials give family members the run around. Cities tell families the BCA has to release the information. The BCA tells the family the city has to release it. When the investigation is complete, the narrative will change to “we cannot release information until the county attorney decides to charge the officers”. Again, county attorneys delay this process, often for months.

When the criminal legal process is finally complete, officials continue to delay, lose, ignore, and refuse families requests for information.

This regularly creates a situation where families are scrambling to get an attorney and file a civil suit before the statute of limitations runs out.

Cities, police departments, and counties are financially liable for lawsuits for police violence, and the statute of limitations allows them - by delaying investigations and information release - to make it difficult or impossible for families to file these lawsuits. The statute of limitations encourages a corrupt system in which insult is added to injury after the loss of a loved one, and justice often never gets its day in court.

Please vote yes on HF 717.