

ACLU People Power Washington

2022 Policing and Public Safety Candidate Questionnaire – State Legislature



[People Power Washington – Police Accountability](#) strives to bring just and equitable public safety to our local communities through relationship building, education and policy reform. We champion policies that divest from police and reinvest in community-based solutions and alternate crisis response, decriminalize non-serious offenses, and implement accountability and enforceable standards for police officers and agencies. Our vision is for public safety in Washington to be community-driven and to meet the needs of all people equitably.

Our group’s work advocating for police accountability in our local communities has made us well aware of the important role our local government and elected officials play in driving policy around this issue. Appreciating the impact the Washington State Legislature has on our day-to-day lives, our hope is to empower voters with a non-partisan resource to understand how to vote their values through a lens of police reform and re-imagining of public safety.

Candidate Information

Candidate Name	Julio Cesar Cortes
Position Sought	State House of Representatives -- 38th Legislative District
Campaign Contact Information	Website: https://electjuliocortes.com/ Email: julio@electjuliocortes.com

Part I – Yes/No Questions

Yes	x
No	
Additional Comments	

1. Do you support prohibiting traffic stops by armed law enforcement officers for low-level, non-moving violations such as vehicle registration violations and equipment failure?

Yes, I do. These stops make our communities of color anxious and afraid rather than safe. We should move away from using armed law enforcement and traffic stops to deal with these low-level violations.

- Traffic stops are one of the most common ways members of the general public interact with police. For decades, there have been significant racial disparities in traffic stops, particularly for low-level violations, unjustified by the crime-fighting value. This undermines community trust, fairness, and wastes law enforcement resources.
- While there’s a perception that traffic stops are dangerous for police, the reality is that they are far more dangerous for those being stopped, especially if they are people of color.
- As a result, Seattle and other jurisdictions, including Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and the State of Virginia, have restricted or banned traffic stops for low-level traffic violations.

2. Do you support establishing an Independent Prosecutor for cases of criminal conduct arising from police killings?

Yes	x
No	
Additional Comments	Yes! Having an Independent Prosecutor will give victims a better chance of seeking and achieving justice. It will also hold law enforcement accountable and incentivize them to better serve the communities they should be protecting.

- Police investigating themselves present an inherent conflict of interest. County Prosecutors work closely with law enforcement and rely on law enforcement for gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses, and providing defense to law enforcement.
- Prosecutors, exercising prosecutorial discretion, often fail to file criminal charges even when unarmed citizens are killed at the hands of law enforcement.

3. Do you support a state law that would remove obstacles, like qualified immunity, when suing police officers for violating a person’s civil rights?

Yes	x
No	
Additional Comments	I believe that our criminal justice system should be just and fair for all parties involved. This means we should remove all obstacles that prevent victims from receiving justice, such as qualified immunity. States should also play a bigger role in holding law enforcement accountable.

- Today when someone’s constitutional rights have been violated or they are seriously injured or killed by the police, victims or victims’ families can only sue police or the department under federal law 42 USC 1983.
- This federal law includes the legal principle of qualified immunity, which protects government officials performing discretionary immunity from civil suits unless the plaintiff shows that the official violated "clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known."
- In essence, there are little to no consequences for when law enforcement commits the above actions.
- State legislation could give individuals a legal remedy under state law that does not currently exist.

4. Do you support a state law that would authorize the Attorney General’s (AG’s) Civil Rights Division to investigate a law enforcement department where there are patterns of misconduct?

Yes	x
No	
Additional Comments	Everyone needs to be held accountable for their actions, and that includes the police. There is no way to feel safe in your community if you don’t have faith in those who have the responsibility to protect and serve. If we want to keep strong ties between law enforcement and the communities that they serve then it is imperative that law enforcement departments maintain their

	transparency. If there are repeated patterns of misconduct then the state must get involved and resolve the issue.
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- Today, in order to hold a law enforcement department accountable for patterns and practices of misconduct such as discriminatory policing, the US Department of Justice is the only entity that can investigate the department and bring a lawsuit or consent decree to effect change.
- State legislation could authorize the AG’s Civil Rights Division to investigate systemic practices that deprive individuals of rights protected by the Washington Constitution, to address the most harmful practices in a department and ensure a minimum quality of policing across Washington.

5. Do you support strengthening law enforcement accountability by establishing statewide protocols for complaints, investigations, discipline, and disciplinary appeals for serious misconduct?

Yes	X
No	
Additional Comments	Yes, as mentioned above, I am a strong believer in strengthening law enforcement accountability. I believe accountability and transparency are the key components in building back trust in law enforcement. We have to stand firm in how we address these very real issues that impact our communities all across the country, and we need to do so with synergy and cooperation with the police and the community. By having a uniform statewide protocol, we can ensure that each precinct is held to the same standards.

- Holding officers accountable through termination or suspension for serious misconduct at the department-level is important for maintaining public trust and confidence in law enforcement.
- Currently, procedures for administrative accountability are determined separately for each police department or sheriff’s office across the state resulting in inconsistencies and lack of public trust.

6. Do you support ending long term solitary confinement?

Yes	X
No	

Additional Comments	Long term solitary confinement only serves to punish and does nothing to benefit the community as a whole. I believe that we should shift our focus away from punitive measures to more rehabilitative ones.
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- The UN Mandela Rules define long term solitary confinement as torture.
- Human beings have a basic biological need to establish and maintain contact with others. The deprivation of human contact causes severe psychological consequences including depression, anxiety, paranoia, PTSD, psychosis, self-harm and even suicide, which interfere with rehabilitation of incarcerated people.
- The use of solitary confinement does not reduce violence or staff assaults in prisons.

Part II – Free Response Questions

What is your idea of public safety? What are tangible ways to measure progress toward this goal?

Our communities deserve to feel safe and at peace. We have to work to prioritize the needs of our communities and support our law enforcement. Residents want to feel safe in their communities. Law enforcement is needed, but it must better reflect the community it serves. I will fully support a more diverse police force to ensure strong connections and trust continue between law enforcement and the community. Additionally, the type of dangers that law enforcement officers face is changing. I believe we must ensure our officers are trained accordingly and have the necessary tools and specialized staff needed to ensure their safety and the safety of the community. As State Representative, I will work to strengthen our Police force by giving them these tools that are necessary to respond to calls safely and appropriately. We have to work to prioritize the needs of our communities and support our law enforcement through accountability and resources.

What would you do, as a state legislator, to further your idea of public safety?

I would strengthen our Police force by giving them the tools and specialized staff necessary to respond to calls safely and appropriately, and I would also support a more diverse police force that reflects the community it serves to ensure strong connections and trust continue between law enforcement and the community.

Are there police reform/accountability measures that are not addressed here that you think would be productive to pursue?

I'd like to see enhanced training around de-escalation tactics for police. Statewide only 8 hours are required in de-escalation training, I know some cities require more but Statewide I believe we should make 40 hours the requirement. Our officers should be better trained in de-escalation tactics to ensure their safety and the safety of our communities.

I affirm that all the information provided in response to this questionnaire is true, complete, and correct to the best of my ability, and that no relevant matter has been omitted.

Signature	<i>Julio Cortes</i>	Date: June 30, 2022
Printed Name	Julio Cortes	