



**For Immediate Release**  
May 30, 2024

**Contact:** Nida Hasan, Communications  
Manager, 312-759-8253;  
[nhasan@impactforequity.org](mailto:nhasan@impactforequity.org)

## **Impact for Equity Releases Issue Briefs Analyzing Implementation of the SAFE-T Act's Policing Reforms**

**Chicago, IL** –Impact for Equity has published a three-part series evaluating the impact of portions of the Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today Act (SAFE-T Act), a 2021 omnibus bill enacted in response to public unrest following the murder of George Floyd. In part, the SAFE-T Act sought to reform policing practices and increase police accountability in Illinois.

To determine whether the Act is meeting its goals, Impact for Equity reviewed compliance with three of the SAFE-T Act's policing reforms, including changes related to the use of body-worn cameras, use of force standards, and officer decertification procedures. The analysis found implementation efforts related to all three reforms, while not insignificant, require serious additional prioritization and emphasis to realize the requirements and intent of the law.

### Body-Worn Cameras

The first brief focuses on the effectiveness of body-worn cameras using data from the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and other police oversight agencies. The SAFE-T Act requires all Illinois law enforcement agencies to use body-worn cameras, including CPD.

The goal of requiring body-worn camera use is to increase accountability, transparency, and community trust in policing. However, the Impact for Equity brief revealed CPD's failure to consistently comply with the law's requirements to activate the cameras and review the footage.

In addition, while all law enforcement agencies are required to submit body-worn camera information to the state of Illinois, many of them are not, and yet these deficiencies are not reflected in the state's annual report, as required.

“While the SAFE-T Act took a necessary step in requiring law enforcement officers to wear body-worn cameras, meaningful investment in implementation is essential to increase accountability and trust,” said Andrea Dantus, Staff Counsel at Impact for Equity.

### Use of Force

The second brief focuses on new policies and reporting requirements that govern the use of force by law enforcement. Impact for Equity reviewed ten Illinois law enforcement agencies' use-of-force policies and reporting records and found that several departments' policies have not been updated to reflect all of the provisions of the SAFE-T Act.

“For the SAFE-T Act’s new use-of-force standard to be fully impactful, departments must update their policies with all of the Act’s requirements, and they must instruct their officers on the changes to when force is justified and when force it is not,” said Ariel Hairston, Staff Counsel at Impact for Equity.

Additionally, some law enforcement agencies are failing to report uses of force and deaths in custody to the state of Illinois, making it difficult to assess trends across the state.

### Decertification

The third brief focuses on the revised officer decertification system, Illinois’s system for determining when an officer no longer meets standards for practice and should lose their certification. The SAFE-T Act fundamentally changed the decertification process by 1) broadening the list of conduct that leads to automatic decertification, 2) creating a framework for discretionary decertification, and 3) increasing transparency into the process.

Despite its potential, two years since the changes have gone into effect, critical aspects of the new process have stalled: zero discretionary hearings have taken place, one of the public databases is unavailable, and the publicly accessible database and annual reports lack information that would promote transparency.

“Any further delay in implementing the decertification provisions of the SAFE-T Act denies the public a means for holding officers accountable for wrongdoing, threatens public safety, and risks further eroding trust in law enforcement,” said Amy Thompson, Staff Counsel at Impact for Equity.

With the legislative session coming to an end, the General Assembly, alongside state agencies, should turn its attention to reviewing these important SAFE-T Act provisions and ensure they are properly implemented.

### **About Impact for Equity:**

*Impact for Equity, formerly known as BPI, is a public interest law and policy center that has worked at the front lines of racial, economic, and social justice in the Chicago region and Illinois for over 50 years. Learn more about us as <https://www.impactforequity.org/>.*

###

**Follow us on social media:**

