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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 12, 2020

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**POLL SHOWS STRONG SUPPORT FOR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT, MORE POLICE
Also, A Need to Raise Level of Confidence In Police Among African Americans**

A countywide poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies for the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission shows strong support and respect for local law enforcement throughout Shelby County while at the same time reflecting a need to raise the level of confidence in police among African Americans.

The Crime Commission spearheads development of the local Safe Community Plan and develops key outcome indicators for each part of the plan. One of the key goals of the plan is strengthening community involvement in crime prevention efforts and improving community relations with law enforcement. A key outcome indicator for this goal is the level of community satisfaction with law enforcement. The professional poll was conducted as a means of determining this particular outcome indicator.

The poll was conducted July 26-28 and included 450 registered voters, with 294 being registered voters in Memphis. The ethnic/racial breakdown was 48% white, 46% African American, 5% other, and 1% refused countywide. The breakdown among Memphis respondents was 53% African American, 40% white, 6% other, and 1% refused. (For age and gender breakdowns, see the full report at www.memphiscrime.org.)

Respondents were first asked about the county's general direction, with 48% indicating it was moving in the right direction and 35% feeling it was "on the wrong track." The overall positive response occurred across all key subgroups.

As expected, the pandemic dominated as the top priority issue government leaders should address, with 38% of respondents naming it. Crime and public safety came in second on the priority issue list, with 19% raising it as the top priority.

An overwhelming 95% of respondents across all subgroups indicated they respect local law enforcement, with 67% strongly agreeing and 28% somewhat agreeing. At the same time, when asked to rate the job local police are doing in their neighborhood, while 71% said excellent/good, there was a racial gap, with 56% of African Americans giving local police a positive rating for neighborhood policing compared to 85% of white voters.

Every key subgroup in the poll strongly endorsed additional resources for law enforcement. This included:

- 78% supporting the hiring of more police officers (with both African American and white respondents at the same high level of support),
- 69% supporting an increased law enforcement presence in their neighborhood (74% of African Americans and 65% of whites), and
- 63% agreeing generally that local law enforcement does not have all the tools it needs to effectively fight crime (61% of African Americans and 66% of whites).

There is a strong sense of personal safety shared across all demographic and geographic subgroups, with:

- 63% saying they always feel safe throughout the community (61% of African Americans and 65% of whites) and
- 76% responding that they always feel safe in their neighborhood (74% of African Americans and 78% of whites).

On some specific issues, the results do reflect the need for law enforcement to raise the level of confidence in police among African Americans. When asked to rate local law enforcement on five specific issues, fewer than half of African American respondents gave an overall positive rating on four of them:

- 66% of respondents felt that local law enforcement is doing an excellent or good job enforcing the law, but only 50% of African Americans felt that compared to 82% of white respondents;
- 57% felt that local police are doing an excellent or good job at being honest and trustworthy, but only 45% of African Americans felt that compared to 71% of whites;
- 56% felt that local law enforcement does an excellent or good job of protecting people from violent crime, but only 43% of African Americans compared to 70% of white respondents;
- 52% felt local police do an excellent or good job solving crime, but the percentage drops to 37% among African Americans compared to 68% among whites; and

- 51% felt that local law enforcement does an excellent or good job of not using excessive force on suspects, but it drops to 36% among African Americans compared to 66% among whites. Framed another way, when asked whether local law enforcement officers use excessive force too often, there was a split, with 46 agreeing (50% of African Americans and 43% of whites) and 46% disagreeing (39% of African Americans and 54% of whites).

Memphis residents in the survey (a total of 294 voters) were asked whether they favored placing a referendum on the November 3 ballot to amend the city charter to allow Memphis police officers (and firefighters) to live outside of Memphis but within a 50-mile radius of the city limits. An overwhelming 77% said they supported having a referendum, with only 18% opposed. This sentiment crossed all key subgroups, with 74% of African American voters indicating support and 80% of white voters supportive. Yet, the Memphis City Council has voted 7-6 to remove the referendum from the November ballot.

“Respect for local law enforcement and support for more police officers is overwhelming across the board among various subgroups polled. At the same time, there is a feeling – especially among African American respondents – that there is room for improvement, ranging from reducing violent crime to reducing unnecessary use of force”, said Bill Gibbons, president of the Crime Commission.

Public Opinion Strategies is a national research firm headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. Founded in 1991, it has conducted over ten million interviews with voters and consumers in all 50 states and over two dozen foreign countries. It has a track record of accurate polling in the Memphis/Shelby County community.

A detailed report on the public opinion poll is available on the Crime Commission website at www.memphiscrime.org.

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About the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission (www.memphiscrime.org): Memphis Shelby Crime Commission is an independent, non-profit 501(c) (3) organization that “quarterbacks” the work of the Safe Community Plan and its partners. It is funded through the generous contributions of many private sector donors. Ben Adams, chairman emeritus of Baker Donelson law firm, serves as chair of the board, and Bill Gibbons serves as president of the Commission.

About the Safe Community Plan (www.memphiscrime.org): Launched in 2007, the Safe Community Plan, an action plan spearheaded by the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission, is a community-based crime reduction initiative. Implementation of the Safe Community Plan is chaired by Shelby County District Attorney General Amy Weirich.