

## **Beta Sigma Discusses Police Reform Act with Legislators, Law Enforcement & Public**

On May 20, 2021, Beta Sigma Boulé of Springfield, Massachusetts, sponsored and facilitated a webinar discussion of the “Justice, Equity and Accountability in Law Enforcement Act” which was signed into law by the Governor of Massachusetts on December 31, 2020. This forum is part of Beta Sigma’s W.E.B. Du Bois Public Policy Series. Beta Sigma’s Criminal Justice Committee, led by Archon Lee Hines, will continue to focus on this topic and criminal record expungement. Following opening remarks by Sire Archon Michael Weekes, the distinguished panel provided an overview of this comprehensive legislation and responded to questions from the moderator Archon Jeffrey Johnson.

The Justice, Equity, and Accountability in Law Enforcement Act has specific provisions to address police conduct. In addition, it creates several commissions including, for the first time in Massachusetts, the Peace Officers Standards & Training Commission, or POST which can de-certify police officers. Key provisions of the Act address topics such as a ban on chokeholds, duty to intervene, qualified immunity, no-knock warrant restrictions, and mandated training.

The distinguished panel was composed of legislative and law enforcement officials who provided information about, as well as insights into, the current Act:



State Senator Eric P. Lesser, First Hampden & Hampshire District



State Representative Bud L. Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> Hampden District



Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins, Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Tompkins is President of the Massachusetts Sheriff's Association, President of the Massachusetts Chapter and Region 1 Vice President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.



Chief Mike J. Wynn, Pittsfield Police Department. Chief Wynn was appointed by the Governor to the newly formed Peace Officers Standards & Training Commission.

Following a robust discussion that included additional questions from webinar attendees, Sire Archon Michael Weekes closed the program by encouraging the audience to stay engaged, monitor work of the newly created commissions, and ensure that progress gained would not be lost.