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December 1, 2018

Hon. Gurbir S. Grewal
Office of the Attorney General
Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street, Box 080
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0080

Re: Police Use of Force

Dear Attorney General Grewal:

I am writing in reaction to the recent investigative journalism series by NJ Advance Media on the use of force by local police in New Jersey, and the hope that the revelation of this data will prompt decisive action by the Office of the State Attorney General. The series brings to light several disturbing trends and patterns of racial bias in the practice and administration of local law enforcement. The breadth of racial disparities is such that the profile of our state in the reflection of the data gives the appearance of the worst examples of 20th century Jim Crow southern communities.

The Black Parents Workshop Inc., representing the interests of Black students in Maplewood and South Orange, is keenly aware of the disproportionate use of force against civilians, and the disproportionate application against Black people. We took up the cause of Black youth who

were assaulted by Maplewood police after our township's Independence Day fireworks event in 2016. Our repeated demands for the release of video recordings of the incident were repeatedly rebuffed by local officials on the Maplewood Township Committee. That ordeal persisted until the New Jersey Supreme Court decision that qualified police video recordings as part of the public record. Upon release of the video, the Township Committee demanded the resignations of the chief of police and captain.

We have also raised objection to the placement of police officers in our schools, and specifically, communicated (letter attached) our concerns to your office over the manner in which students' rights may have been violated at Columbia High School. The experiences between youth of color with our local police has been unpleasant and fraught with abuse.

It should not take a cat and mouse game to hold our local police accountable. Nor should it require an extraordinary effort for citizens to have some degree of confidence that their rights will be respected and they will have access to credible information regarding the performance of local officers. At present, a resident or casual visitor to our two towns runs the risk of an encounter that is neither based on law or a respect for an individual's humanity. We learned that lesson after the experience of our youth on July 5, 2016.

The racial disparities evident in the data produced by the reporting of NJ Advance Media are particularly disturbing. They fit a pattern of bias that foreshadows unfortunate and often life-threatening encounters Black and Latino motorists and pedestrians have with local police officers. The mistrust generated by such encounters serve neither police or civilians, and leads to frustrations in the administration of justice.

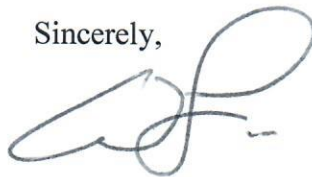
As you consider developing measures to address the underlying causes of the data reported by NJ Advance Media, we would like to offer some suggestions based on our on-the-ground perspective. The following are specific recommendations we hope you will consider.

1. The Attorney General should direct all school districts to examine the data on police use of force and immediately remove from school buildings any officer found on the list

2. The re-establishment of the Task Force on the Use of Force created by Attorney General Robert Del Tufo under the administration of Governor Jim Florio,
3. Creation of a Use of Force Hotline in the Office of the Attorney General for citizen complaints
4. Electronic reporting of citizen complaints
5. **A moratorium on the placement of uniformed and armed police officers in public schools as School Resource Officers**
6. Requiring officers to provide a sworn, written statement no less than 6 hours after being involved in an incident in which force was used to subdue or apprehend a civilian. Force being defined as physical restraint or contact or the use of an instrument (e.g. baton, firearm, stun gun) to overpower a civilian.
7. A review of all arrests of individuals by officers cited as those who have repeatedly used force according to the reporting of NJ Advance Media
8. A review of all officers cited as those who have repeatedly used force according to the reporting of NJ Advance Media
9. Mandatory drug testing of all officers that use force during interactions with civilians within 6 hours of the incident
10. Random drug testing of all police officers
11. Mandatory quarterly public reporting by local police departments of all incidents of use of force by officer and race/gender of civilian
12. Expedited review of citizen complaints against local police officers
13. Increased protections for officers who report incidents of excessive force by fellow officers

We offer these recommendations in light of your acknowledging the gravity of the statistics cited in the reporting of NJ Advance Media. This organization stands prepared to support your efforts to restore confidence in local policing and provide citizens with the assurance that their rights will be respected and protected.

Sincerely,



Walter Fields
Chairman
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