



For Immediate Release

Broad Coalition Joins Forces to Call For Action On Policing and Criminal Justice Reform

August 3, 2016, Newark, New Jersey—Today, a broad coalition of leading New Jersey civil rights, community, and religious leaders “requested that the legislature undertake a comprehensive and inclusive examination of criminal justice reforms needed to positively transform the relationship between police and the residents of New Jersey.”

In the attached letter addressed to the Senate President, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the leaders in both bodies, the coalition explained that “the recent heartbreaking events in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Falcon Heights, Minnesota and Dallas, Texas have heightened the reality that, in New Jersey and on the national level, such a transformation in the relationship between law enforcement and many of the communities they serve is in order.”

The coalition further noted that “these events have caused policymakers across the nation to reflect on how police accountability measures—including efforts to build trust and legitimacy, improve oversight, and enhance officer wellness—can be strengthened without impacting public safety.” At the same time, the coalition explained, “these incidents have occurred in the midst of wide, often bipartisan, agreement that our nation’s focus on incarceration, rather than rehabilitation and incarceration alternatives, has had devastating consequences—particularly for our communities of color. Indeed, a recent report by the Sentencing Project revealed that New Jersey has the largest gap in black-white incarceration rates in the nation.”

Accordingly, the coalition called for a “comprehensive and inclusive set of hearings” on policing and criminal justice reform “that could serve to educate the public and policy makers, and to initiate the introduction of more holistic and meaningful criminal justice reform legislation, with a focus on tested strategies like community policing.” These hearings would enable the state to evaluate the best practices of other states and serve as the starting point for comprehensive policing and criminal justice reform legislation in New Jersey.

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