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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

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Attorney General Eric Holder
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I am writing to express my concern about recent reports listing two of New Jersey's largest police departments among 26 police agencies in 16 states that are barred from receiving federal economic recovery package funds for Community Oriented Policing programs due to alleged past grant violations. Specifically, I would ask that you work with these New Jersey departments to review their particular situations and explore all possible arrangements with these Police Departments to ensure they have access to federal recovery investments for public safety programs.

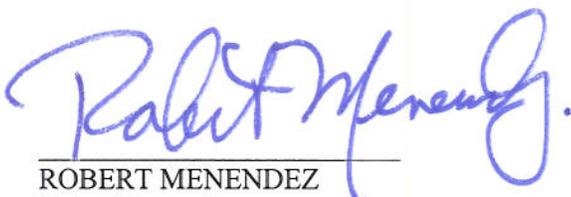
The Police Departments in Newark and Camden are among the largest departments barred from receiving stimulus funds. It is vitally important to New Jersey families that we ensure our communities have adequate police protection. Given the severity of the economic recession, the cities' severe financial distress, higher than average crime rates in these cities and the fact that any noncompliance occurred during a previous administration, I believe their situations merit review. In the case of the Newark Police Department, there is not only a new city administration but also new leadership at the Police Department. With regard to the Camden Police Department which is now under the direction of the New Jersey Attorney General, new financial controls are being implemented in conjunction with the State Attorney General's Office.

I ask that you please review documentation of any past funding violations and explore all options that might exist to allow the Police Departments to repay debts over an extended period of time. An extended repayment plan could allow these departments to protect public safety during this current economic crisis. To ensure that all federal funds are appropriately managed, new financial arrangement should include new financial and program management controls.

Public safety must always be a top priority, and families in these communities should not have their safety compromised because of bureaucratic mistakes that were not their fault. These police departments should not get a free pass, but they should be given a sincere opportunity to address prior mistakes and continue to enhance public safety through the use of federal investments.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator