United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 2015

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice & Science Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice & Science Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Shelby and Senator Mikulski:

As you consider funding levels for this fiscal year, we write to request that you fund the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring Program at a minimum of $249.5 million, the amount requested in the President's FY 2016 budget, in the fiscal year 2016 Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill.

As you know, in recent years, budget constraints have forced many municipalities to either reduce hiring or lay off public safety officers. While fiscal responsibility requires tough budget decisions at every level of government, public safety must not be compromised in the process. The COPS Hiring program represents a fiscally responsible solution to ensure that our communities remain safe; the Brookings Institution found it to be "one of the most cost-effective options available for fighting crime." When officers establish a presence on their patrols using community policing principles, they can develop positive relationships with the communities they serve. These relationships in turn increase law enforcement's ability to solve local crimes and resolve public safety problems. This proactive approach to policing prevents crime from occurring, saving taxpayers the high societal costs associated with crime, incarceration and services for victims.

Since its creation, the COPS Office has assisted over 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 jurisdictions with over $14 billion in funding to hire more than 125,000 additional officers. In FY 2014, COPS Hiring granted $124 million to 215 communities to hire, preserve, or rehire 944 law enforcement officers. In FY 2014, there were heightened restrictions for funding requests leading many communities to forego applications, but without the restrictions, approximately $1.8 billion would have been requested. The $249.5 million requested is a small fraction of the $1 billion appropriated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and less than the $298 million previously appropriated in FY 2010.

In addition to hiring more officers, the COPS Hiring Program offers innovative programs to enhance the effectiveness of community policing. For instance, the COPS Office provides training and technical assistance to educate law enforcement officers on community policing best practices. COPS

Hiring also provides grants for local agencies to replace obsolete technology, enabling them to efficiently and effectively investigate, respond to, and prevent crime.

We are supported in this request by law enforcement organizations including Fraternal Order of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association. We are also supported by the United States Conference of Mayors.

We appreciate the hard work and leadership that you have shown on these issues. Ongoing crime and violence in our cities continue to demonstrate the vital need for increased police protection in our communities. Therefore, as you determine the funding levels for this program, we ask that you support funding for the COPS Hiring Program at the highest possible level.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Gary Peters
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator