



***Testimony of
Martin Perez Esq., President
The Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey
Before The Advisory Committee on Police Standards
April 27, 2007***

My name is Martin Perez and I am the President of the Latino Leadership Alliance of NJ (LLANJ). I would like to thank the Advisory Committee on Police Standards for the opportunity to provide testimony about the potential termination of the 1999 consent decree concerning the practice of racial profiling by New Jersey State Police.

The Latino Leadership of Alliance was founded in 1999 and is the major Latino advocacy organization in New Jersey representing most of the Latino organizations across the state.

I am here to advise you that the Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey urges you to continue the terms of the consent decree. Our position is driven firstly by the historical context which led to the establishment of the consent decree and secondly by the testimony provided by New Jersey State Police Detective Sergeant Scott Turner to this Advisory Committee. Sergeant Turner maintains that he was instructed to deceive the federal monitors responsible for the oversight of the NJSP pursuant to the consent decree. The Latino Leadership Alliance of NJ urges the appointment of an independent body to comprehensively and thoroughly investigate Detective Sergeant Turner's allegations. Until these allegations are properly investigated by an independent entity and the public trust in the New Jersey State Police is rebuilt, LLANJ will oppose the lifting of the consent decree.

We believe that a cultural change is necessary within the New Jersey State Police for the public trust to be re-established and true reform to be realized. LLANJ has met with the current State Police Administration in order to begin a dialogue to help create a diverse and culturally responsive environment not only for the Latino men and women serving within the New Jersey State Police, but most importantly for the civilian Latino Community. Regretfully these attempts at dialogues with the current New Jersey State

Police Administration to address the concerns of the Latino community have not been productive. For example, at a November 20, 2006, meeting with top State Police brass, LLANJ requested information listing the names and the total number of all Latino New Jersey State Troopers. We were promised that the information we requested would be provided in a timely matter, and to date we still are waiting for a response to our request.

Excluding Latinos from participating in the development, administration and implementation of law enforcement policy is part of what got us into this predicament in the first place; to continue to ignore our concerns is a terrible mistake. Any attempt at serious reform within the Division of State Police, must be accompanied by real transparency, accountability and inclusion. Therefore, LLANJ supports the creation of an Independent Community Police Commission. We agree that the Community Police Commission should be under the jurisdiction of the Public Advocate and include broad community representation.

Additionally, LLANJ has great concerns regarding the poor recruitment, retention and promotions of Latinos in the State Police. The promotional system is totally subjective and has a discriminatory effect on Latino officers. We have brought this issue to the attention of Superintendent and the Attorney General but so far we have not seen any progress. This committee must request from the Attorney General an investigation into the on-going recruitment, retention and promotions practices of the NJ State Police.

Lastly, comprehensive immigration reform has become a national issue that will hopefully be resolved by Congress. In the meantime New Jersey must have safeguards in place to protect the immigrant population. The extreme case of Morristown applying to the Department of Homeland Security in an effort to deputize local police to enforce immigration laws is an example of the misuse of Homeland Security Initiatives for racial profiling purposes. Local police should not venture into this realm and the State of New Jersey should provide the safeguards needed so that under no circumstance will local police departments profile citizens because of the color of their skin, their ethnicity, or immigration status.

For the foregoing reasons the Latino Leadership Alliance strongly recommends that the State of New Jersey should not join the United States Department of Justice in filing a motion to terminate the consent decree concerning the practice of racial profiling by the New Jersey State Police.

Once again, we thank you for affording us the opportunity to testify before this committee. I will gladly respond to any questions you have about our recommendations.