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Denver Latino Commission

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September 9, 2010

The Honorable John W. Hickenlooper
Mayor of Denver
City and County Building
1437 Bannock Street, Room 350
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mayor Hickenlooper,

This letter is meant to serve as the Denver Latino Commission's ("Commission") position and recommendations with respect to the incident involving the Denver Police Department and Mr. Michael DeHerrera. As recognized by many at this point, Mr. Ron Perea's handling of the community meeting on August 19, 2010 was inadequate, and served as a basis for his decision to resign as the Manager of Safety for the City and County of Denver. While that resignation was necessary in the eyes of the community, the community has also communicated to us that the consequences of the incident cannot stop there.

The communication from the community has largely come in the form of meetings that include people from a diverse background *within* the community, as well as a diverse group of other communities (i.e. African American, GLBT, and Native American). Thus, while the Commission generally operates primarily with the support of the Latino/a community, the DeHerrera incident is one that has galvanized various communities into one. The voice of this diverse group is frustrated, and is questioning the trust it can place in the DPD as well as the chain of command in the DPD and the Manager of Safety's office.

The Commission is very concerned with the impact this incident may have on the trust between the community and the DPD, the Manager of Safety, and your office. As was reported to you this week, people in the community are more inclined to not contact DPD because they fear the DPD more than they fear criminals in their communities. This breakdown in trust will only have a deleterious effect on the ability of the decent and honest DPD officers to perform their duties.

The fear of city and government entities and certain of its employees provides a good transition to an issue about which we have previously written you. This fear is further exacerbated by programs such as Secure Communities, which we can confirm to you our community views with skepticism and caution. The Commission recently held a Community Forum on September 2, 2010 specifically on the issue of immigration. The Forum ended up largely being a discussion about Secure Communities, its scope and potential impact. The community feels that Secure Communities will be another means to





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profile people of color with specific emphasis on Latinos/as, and that there are not enough checks and balances in place for the program to operate in a just fashion.

The serious issue the Commission sees developing is that the DeHerrera incident and Secure Communities, taken in conjunction with the tenor of the country against immigrants from Latin America¹ emanating from Arizona, will erode a relatively fragile trust that you and our community have worked to develop for quite some time.

We therefore recommend the following. First, we maintain that the officers involved in the DeHerrera incident must be terminated both for providing false representations in their reports of the incident, as well as the brutal and excessive force they used on Mr. DeHerrera. Second, we urge you to make a public statement denouncing violence by DPD officers against any members of the Denver community, and third we also urge you to take a stance on immigration in general, and Secure Communities specifically. We understand that you are in the middle of a campaign, but the strength of your voice in support of communities such as ours should not be quelled for fear of losing potential votes come November.

As always, we appreciate your attention to and consideration of the recommendations in this letter.

Sincerely,

Derek C. Blass, Esq., Co-Chair

Theresa M. Solano, Co-Chair

¹ And, notably, this fervor is spreading to other classes of immigrants, as demonstrated by the Koran burning controversy that is currently receiving national news.