

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In light of the recent deaths of several unarmed African-Americans in police-involved incidents, we are writing to urge you to renew the request you made in last year's budget proposal to fully fund the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), which is operated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

NVDRS provides states and communities with funding to track the causes of violent deaths and "guide local decisions about efforts to prevent violence."¹ It is the only state-based reporting system that compiles data on violent deaths from multiple sources, including state and local medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement. It also enables states and the public to track violent deaths resulting from "legal intervention" by law enforcement authorities, and it tracks the race of victims, the causes of injuries, and the relationship of victims to their suspected killers. NVDRS began collecting state data on violent deaths in 1999 and currently reports data collected from 17 states.²

Last year, your Administration requested \$23.57 million as part of CDC's budget request for Fiscal Year 2015. CDC indicated that this funding would enable NVDRS to:

- expand to all 50 states and Washington, D.C. and provide technical assistance to help grantees monitor and report their data;

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Violent Deaths Reporting System* (www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nvdrs/) (accessed Dec. 20, 2014).

² Those states are Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

- ensure that NVDRS data supports violence prevention activities by working with states to produce standard analyses on a range of topics; and
- link NVDRS data with other data sources, such as child fatality review reports and adult protective services reports.³

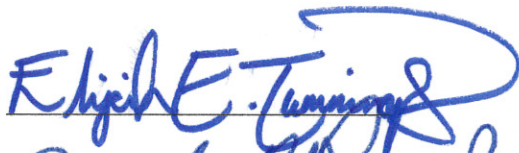
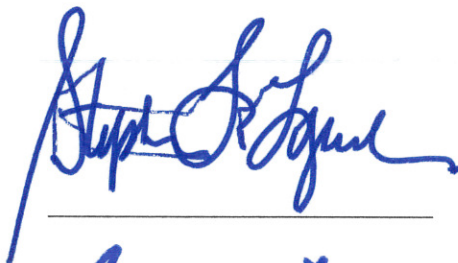
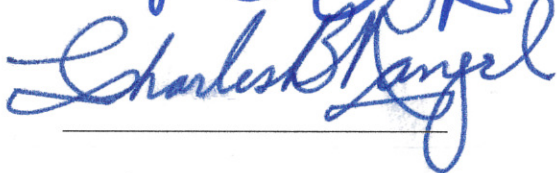

In response to this request, Congress appropriated only \$11.33 million, and as a result NVDRS is in the process of being utilized in only 32 states.

We believe full funding for the NVDRS is imperative to implement a nationwide reporting program. According to the most recent NVDRS data from the 17 states that are already reporting, between 1999 and 2011, African-Americans were killed during “legal intervention” by police and others with legal authority to use deadly force at a rate three times higher than their white peers. In addition, “Hispanic-Americans” in the 17 reporting states were disproportionately more likely to die as a result of being injured by law enforcement officers.⁴

These disparities are alarming and unacceptable for a country that holds “equal justice under law” as a core ideal. The lack of comprehensive federal data regarding the number of Americans killed during police encounters also presents a significant challenge for elected officials and citizens interested in providing better training and resources for law enforcement officers.

We look forward to working with you on this request, and thank you for your continued leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *CDC FY 2015 Congressional Justification* (online at http://www.cdc.gov/fmo/topic/Budget%20Information/appropriations_budget_form_pdf/FY2015_CJ_CDC_FINAL.pdf) (accessed Dec. 20, 2014).

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Violent Death Reporting System* (online at <http://wisqars.cdc.gov:8080/nvdrs/nvdrsDisplay.jsp>) (accessed Dec. 20, 2014).

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