June 29, 2009

Mr. Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.  20530-0001

Attorney General Holder:

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention the fact that the Major Cities Chiefs Association, at its meeting held in June 2009, voted to provide a letter of formal support for the work of the recently formed Consortium on Police Leadership in Equity (CPLE). The CPLE is comprised of a group of world-class social science researchers who are willing to conduct objective research on a number of important topics for law enforcement agencies. As detailed on the consortium’s website, “At the core of CPLE’s mission, as well as those [police] departments associated with it, is a deep concern for equity and inclusiveness within the police department itself and between the police department and the community it polices. The CPLE serves as a sort of matchmaker, pairing police departments with world-class researchers. Though many CPLE researchers specialize in issues surrounding race and gender, a wide swath of research interests are represented and can be harnessed to serve the specific equity issues any given department is combating (http://cple.psych.ucla.edu/about-the-cple/).”

Because of CPLE’s philosophy and approach in addressing racial and gender-equity issues as they pertain to law enforcement, many police departments in our nation’s largest cities either have engaged already in joint research with CPLE or have signed on to do so. Indeed, when questions continue to be raised in communities across our country about whether or not police departments engage in racial profiling, it is extremely beneficial to have world-class researchers bring their expert research skills to bear in providing objective analysis in addressing such concerns.

The objectivity of these established scholars is further supported by the fact that the CPLE will not accept money from participating law enforcement partners. This arrangement insures the independence of CPLE research projects, builds community support, and grows our basic understanding of equity in law enforcement. It is a model that deserves the support of funding agencies committed to social equity. It is also a model that has already begun reshaping scholarship and practice related to racial profiling and gender representation in law enforcement, and it has the potential to do much more.
While CPLE has already proven beneficial in helping to address concerns of racial profiling and organizational equity—particularly in Denver, where Chief Gerry Whitman’s leadership allowed the CPLE to be founded—there are additional areas of emphasis for the organization, including the following:

- Police Use of Force
- Immigration Policy Enforcement
- Drug Policy Enforcement
- Organizational Equity
- Youth Offenders
- Media and Community Relations

Considering the gravity and importance of these issues, it is easy to see why chiefs from the Major City Chiefs Association are both supportive of CPLE’s mission and anxious to work with it to determine what leadership moves the chiefs can make to ensure that law enforcement policies and procedures work to ensure racial and gender equity within our departments and within our communities.

In conclusion, please accept this letter as a formal letter of support for the efforts of the Consortium on Police Leadership in Equity. To the extent possible, we would encourage support for CPLE from the various agencies residing within the Department of Justice. Please let us know if you have any additional questions regarding the work that CPLE is already engaged in with some of our member police departments. Such questions may be directed to Chief Robert L. Davis of the San Jose, California Police Department, who is currently serving as the First Vice-President of the Major Cities Chiefs Association and has already engaged in a research effort with CPLE. He may be reached at (408) 277-4212, or by e-mail at Robert.Davis@sanjoseca.gov. Thank you in advance for your review of this letter of support.

All the best,

William J. Bratton
Chief of Police, Los Angeles Police Department
President, Major Cities Chiefs’ Association

c:  Laurie O. Robinson, Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs
    Loretta King, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division