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Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 205-10-6275

Via email: record@judiciary-dem.senate.gov

Re: July 26, 2022 Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing entitled "Law Enforcement Officer Safety: Protecting Those Who Protect and Serve."

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of myself and the Chicago Police Department, thank you for the privilege to speak at the Senate's Committee on Judiciary Hearing. I found my visit to be both informative and professionally rewarding. Thanks and gratitude to you, the Committee members, and your staff for extending themselves to meet our needs as guests. It was an honor to speak on behalf of the Chicago Police Department, Officer Ella French, and all my fellow law enforcement officers.

Attached you will find my responses to the questions and topics posed by Senator Thom Tillis and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angel Novalez".

Angel Novalez
Chief of Constitutional Policing and Reform
Chicago Police Department

Questions from Senator Thom Tillis

1. Do you agree that the *Protect and Serve Act* will successfully deter attacks on our brave men and women in blue?

I believe the *Protect and Serve Act* may play a role in deterring attacks on law enforcement officers through its proposed increase in criminal consequences. Increased penalties and the possibility of being federally charged for crimes committed against law enforcement officers are valuable tools to combat crimes against officers. This type of legislation will also have a positive effect on the morale of the law enforcement community.

2. Other than the *Protect and Serve Act* what other actions can Congress take to support law enforcement and stop these senseless and violent attacks?

Congress can continue to support law enforcement by enacting legislation such as the Officer Ella Grace French Task Force Support Act of 2022 (S.4624). Continuing to pursue illegal purchasers of firearms by funding and creating federal task forces could help reduce the number of firearms in the hands of those who wish to harm law enforcement.

Also, when we speak of supporting our law enforcement officers it is important that we acknowledge their mental health and its crucial role in delivering exceptional police services. Mental health resources and funding initiatives are important to consistently consider to ensure for the mental health treatment and suicide prevention for officers. It is my hope that Congress continues to support and expand funding for programs offered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance such as the Law Enforcement Mental Health Wellness Act Program.

Questions from Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

1. Please provide any thoughts or feedback on one or all of the following topics:
 - a. **S. 4003, the Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022, which Senator Cornyn and I introduced to help law enforcement respond more effectively to people suffering mental or behavioral health crises, and which the Senate Judiciary Committee reported out favorably in May 2022.**

The Chicago Police Department supports training efforts on de-escalation to help officers to stabilize situations and reduce the immediate threat so that more time, options, and resources can be implemented to resolve a situation as peacefully as possible. Mitigating the amount of force required to safely and effectively resolve a conflict reduces the risk to officers and those they serve.

It is of the highest priority and department policy that Chicago Police Department Officers act with the utmost regard for the preservation and sanctity of human life and the safety of all persons involved. It is in accordance with these principles that the Department conducts de-escalation training,

continuing education, and crisis intervention efforts. With the assistance of the *Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022* (S.4003) departments nationwide can continue to educate and train our officers to the benefit of our communities.

b. Necessary updates to the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act, which restored grant funding for law enforcement support services—including suicide-prevention programs and mental health services—and which President Trump signed into law in 2019.

As we know, officers carry the stress and trauma of the job with them and that can become overwhelming over time. The families of officers often carry the burden as well. Expanding the STOIC act to include such items as funding and programs to reduce stress, prevent suicide, and promote mental health, for not only officers but their families as well, may assist in furthering the efforts to support law enforcement officer and their families.

c. The dangers of high-velocity ammunition, which can pose a heightened threat to officer safety.

High velocity ammunition poses a great threat to officer safety. The speed at which a high velocity bullet travels has a devastating effect on the human body and nearly renders an officer's ballistic vest useless. Certain weapons designed to shoot high-velocity ammunition can be shot from a significant distance making it difficult for officers to assess the threat and act accordingly.