



**February 29, 2012**

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 316  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Gray:

As you well know, the past year has seen an unfortunate increase in violence against transgender, transsexual, and gender non-conforming people (hereinafter, trans) in the District of Columbia. We appreciate your leadership in condemning this violence, and your ongoing commitment to curtailing discrimination faced by trans people. We write today to inform you of ongoing challenges we encounter regarding both police response to anti-trans violence and day-to-day police interactions with trans people.

At the height of last summer's violence, we met with Metropolitan Police Department Chief Cathy Lanier and other senior MPD officials on multiple occasions to find ways to improve police relations with trans communities, to build stronger communication between MPD and community organizations, and to identify ways to expand vital training on police interactions with trans people. Unfortunately, those conversations were fruitless. Chief Lanier and her staff seemed to have a response for everything, while taking responsibility for nothing. After considerable community dialogue and assessment, we determined that our challenge with MPD lies in pervasive anti-trans bias throughout the department.

The biased policing problem has significantly deleterious effects for trans people in DC. In particular, investigation of hate crimes, or even classifying crimes as hate-motivated, is put in jeopardy by biased officers. Furthermore, biased policing leads to significant trans profiling – commonly called “walking while trans” arrests – especially in the District's constitutionally questionable Prostitution Free Zones.

Thus in October 2011, the DC Trans Coalition engaged the Community Relations Service (CRS) of the U.S. Department of Justice to pursue mediation with MPD, with a view towards reducing the level of anti-trans violence in this city, and improving relations between police and the communities we serve. CRS staff were able to meet with MPD in late November, but to date, MPD has not agreed to join us in mediation. We sought this path as a good faith effort to get beyond the obvious impasses we had reached in the summer. The benefits of a mediation process of this style is that it is entirely confidential for all parties concerned and we come out at the end with concrete, written commitments for actions both sides can take, with agreed upon deadlines for completion. We therefore ask that you direct Chief Lanier to sit down with us in the presence of CRS mediators, so that we can begin the process of truly increasing trans people's safety.

As an alternative to mediation, we encourage you to find other solutions to address the ongoing problem of anti-trans biased policing. Last year, the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division released the findings of its investigation into the New Orleans Police Department, which

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray

February 29, 2012

Page 2

was conducted at the request of that city's mayor. This report found significant anti-LGBT bias in policing, and offered recommendations policy, training, and practice changes. The City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission also recently concluded a study of anti-trans policing in the Los Angeles Police Department and issued extensive recommendations. Next month, the Chicago City Council will consider legislation to create a trans oversight board for police.

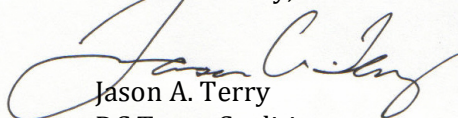
What distinguishes DC from these three examples is that many of the appropriate policies and procedures are technically in place. However in our experience, their implementation is sorely lacking, and MPD has been unwilling to hear or answer to constructive feedback from community members. You may consider commissioning a new study of biased policing in DC. The last study, conducted six years ago, only looked at racially-motivated bias (and then, only against African-Americans and Latino/as). Shortly thereafter, the Police Complaints Board expressed significant reservations about the MPD study's research methods and the conclusions reached.

The changes we seek from MPD are neither radical nor overly burdensome. Our goals are as follows:

- **An immediate update on the status of investigations of violent crimes involving trans people, especially the seven unsolved homicides from the past decade.** There have been more confirmed trans murders in DC than any other city in the United States since 2000, yet only about a quarter of these have been solved. However, MPD has persistently failed to explain why these cases languish, sometimes for over ten years.
- **The reestablishment of the Biased Policing Task Force, with trans representation.** MPD disbanded this body in 2008, in spite of the recommendation from the Police Complaints Board and several community organizations that its work continue.
- **Verifiable discipline taken against MPD officers who violate policy related to trans people.** Both 2010 and 2011 saw egregious attacks on trans people by police officers. In one case, while no criminal proceedings took place, MPD has been unable to explain whether or not the offending officer is still patrolling the streets, potentially endangering the lives of other trans people.
- **A budget and timetable for ensuring that all MPD officers receive training in interacting with trans people, using community-informed curriculum, over the course of the next 18 months.** In the first 18 months of MPD's LGBT training program, which is run entirely by community volunteers, approximately 200 officers have been trained. At this pace, it would take over 30 years for the entire force to receive appropriate training – an entirely unacceptable time period.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you further. We have also updated the DC Council on these issues today, as part of the annual oversight hearing on MPD, and our testimony for that hearing is enclosed. I can be reached anytime at 202.615.1690 or at [jason@jaterry.com](mailto:jason@jaterry.com).

Yours sincerely,



Jason A. Terry  
DC Trans Coalition

cc: Paul Quander, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety  
Jeffrey Richardson, Director, Mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs