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August 19, 2015

Acting Attorney General John Jay Hoffman
R.J. Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street
P.O. Box 093
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: Release of Public Information on Officer-Involved Shooting of Radazz Hearn

Dear Acting Attorney General Hoffman:

The shooting of fourteen-year-old Radazz Hearn by a state trooper and Mercer County sheriff's officer on August 7 raises serious concerns about excessive use of force by law enforcement. Yet nearly two weeks after the incident, your office has provided scant information about the shooting to Radazz's family and the broader Trenton community. In a matter such as this, the growing number of unanswered questions and absence of transparency can serve to exacerbate any distrust and division between community members and law enforcement.

We urge you to immediately provide greater details about the shooting to Radazz's family and to the public, including the names of the officers who shot Radazz Hearn. Absent a specific, particularized, and credible threat to the safety of the officers or their families, parents should not be left to wonder who shot their child. Keeping the names of the officers secret unnecessarily harms the transparency and accountability essential to democratic policing. New Jersey should join other police departments that now recognize the release of the names of officers involved in police shootings as a best practice.¹

Other recent police-involved shooting cases in New Jersey have proceeded for years without the

¹ See, e.g., POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM, DEFINING MOMENTS FOR POLICE CHIEFS 57 (2015), <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/definingmoments.pdf>; Aubrey Whelan, *Phila. Police to release names in police shootings*, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER (July 3, 2015), available at http://articles.philly.com/2015-07-03/news/64042551_1_police-shootings-police-involved-shootings-police-advisory-commission. In response to the recent shooting and killing of Akai Gurley in Brooklyn, the NYPD released within 12 hours the name of the police officer involved in the shooting. This is particularly notable since the shooting took place at a time when tensions were running high in New York City in response to the shooting deaths of Eric Garner and Mike Brown. See J. David Goodman, *In Brooklyn, 2 Young Men, a Dark Stairwell and a Gunshot*, NEW YORK TIMES, (November 23, 2014), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/24/nyregion/police-tactic-scrutinized-after-accidental-shooting.html>.

release of this basic information;² communities and family members should not have to wait indefinitely or fight in court for the information to which they should be entitled.

Sincerely,



Udi Ofer
Executive Director



Ed Barocas
Legal Director



Ari Rosmarin
Public Policy Director

² See, e.g., Peter J. Sampson, *Appeals court blocks release of documents in fatal police shooting near the Rutherford-Lyndhurst border*, BERGEN RECORD (June 11, 2015), <http://www.northjersey.com/news/appeals-court-blocks-release-of-documents-in-fatal-police-shooting-near-the-rutherford-lyndhurst-border-1.1354219>.