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July 17, 2013

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
United States Senator  
780 Third Ave.  
Suite 2301  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Senator ~~Schumer~~:

I write to express my disappointment and grave concern for your recommendation of New York Police Commissioner Ray Kelly for Secretary of Homeland Security. Commissioner Kelly's tenure is marked by two major discriminatory and ineffective policies: 1. the abuse of stop and frisk, and 2. the surveillance of Muslims. I urge you to walk down Flatbush Avenue or attend church services with me and ask our constituents whether they have faith in Ray Kelly as police commissioner, let alone as Secretary of Homeland Security. I request you withdraw your support for Commissioner Kelly.

For the past decade, communities of color in New York City have been ravaged by their police department; by a police department that treats certain people as a permanent class of criminals. Being a young Black or Latino male does not make one a criminal, and being Muslim does not make one a terrorist. However, for more than a decade, that is how these communities have been treated by the New York City Police Department.

According to the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), from 2002 to 2011 the NYPD conducted more than 4.3 million street stops. Nearly four million of these stops were of innocent New Yorkers. These are incidents where neither a summons was issued nor an arrest was made, but a human being was publicly humiliated and frightened. Black and Latino residents comprised about 87 percent of people stopped during this decade long period. The NYCLU study also revealed that the number of stops of young black men exceeded the entire city population of young black men (168,126 stops, and only 158,406 young black men resident in New York City). In addition, the NYCLU report made clear what many community members already knew, that police officers used physical force with much greater frequency against Blacks and Latinos during stops.

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In a similar type of profiling, albeit religious rather than racial, tens of thousands of Muslims in New York and in other states are under surveillance by the NYPD. We know based on leaked documents from 2006, that the NYPD has surveilled and collected intelligence on at least 250 mosques, 12 Islamic schools, 31 Muslim student organizations, 10 non-profit organizations, 138 "persons of interest" and 256 "ethnic hotspots." A recent report by the City University of New York Law School reveals that the NYPD spying and infiltration creates a pervasive climate of fear and suspicion that encroaches upon every aspect of their religious, political, and community lives.

Commissioner Kelly has asserted publicly that his policies have been extremely effective in preventing terrorist attacks in New York City post 9/11, and in driving down the amount of crime per capita in New York City to record lows. However, I believe the facts establish that they have not proven to effective both with regards to stop and frisk or with regard to Muslim surveillance.

We now have communities with a complete distrust of their police department and Commissioner. Senator Schumer, I worry for the young men humiliated by stop and frisk on a daily basis or a Muslim teenager who is afraid to go to her mosque or speak in class. This is not the New York we grew up in. Our youth should not be living in fear. Furthermore, Commissioner Kelly's failure to consider the serious concerns of regular New Yorkers, faith leaders, activists, and elected officials has been equally disconcerting. As you would agree, there is a demonstrable disparate impact to Commissioner Kelly's stop and frisk and Muslim surveillance policies. As noted above, these policies have alienated a large swathe of New York's voters, and of the youth who are the future of our community. Given the negative impact of Commissioner Kelly's policies in New York, it gives me pause to imagine such policies being played out at the national level against the backdrop of immigration reform, among other federal issues that focus upon America's demographic diversity.

It is for these reasons that I urge you to withdraw your support for New York City Police Department Commissioner Ray Kelly for the position of Secretary of Homeland Security.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Yours in Partnership,



KEVIN PARKER

cc: President Barack Obama