

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1304

May 27, 2021

Kristen Clarke
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Clarke:

We write to urge the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to withdraw the prior administration's opposition to the consent decree to reform the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

The DOJ's formal opposition could chill the deployment of federal resources to help implement and enforce the CPD consent decree — even though the consent decree was previously recommended by the DOJ itself. After a yearlong investigation, in 2017 the DOJ under President Obama concluded that CPD engages in a “pattern or practice of using [...] deadly force, in violation of the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution,” especially in Black and Latino neighborhoods.¹ But in 2018, the Trump Administration DOJ filed a statement in court opposing the proposed consent decree negotiated by the Illinois Attorney General's office. The statement repeatedly cited a discredited study alleging dangerous impacts of police reform on public safety. It concluded that the consent decree would “strip the CPD of the flexibility it needs to address the violent crime crisis in Chicago”.²

Since DOJ issued the statement of opposition, CPD officers have shot and killed 15 people, nearly all Black and Latino men.³ The City missed 70% of its consent decree guidelines in 2019⁴ and another 40% in 2020.⁵ Still the DOJ has not yet amended or reversed its formal opposition.

While we are encouraged by the Biden Administration's commitment to police reform, we urge the DOJ to make good on that commitment by formally withdrawing its opposition to the CPD consent decree. We additionally urge that the DOJ lend any technical expertise and other resources requested by the Illinois Attorney General's Office to ensure the consent decree's full and timely enforcement.

¹<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-findings-investigation-chicago-police-department>

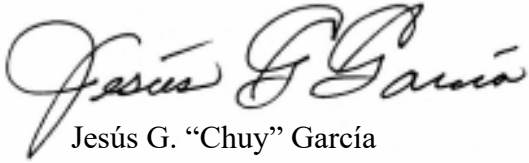
² <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1100631/download>

³ <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/cities>

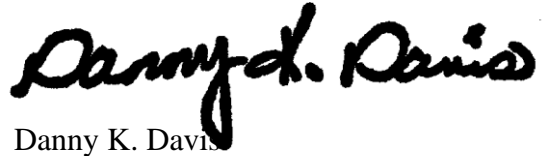
⁴<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-politics/chicago-police-missed-more-than-70-of-deadlines-in-first-year-of-consent-decree-report-says/2292222/>

⁵<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2021/3/31/22360397/chicago-police-department-missed-40-percent-consent-decree-deadlines-lightfoot-substantial-progress>

Sincerely,



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



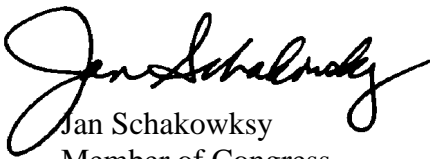
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