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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

August 31, 2011

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**DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION**

Bernard Melekian  
Director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice  
145 N Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Director Melekian,

I am writing to you to save lives.

Especially, I ask that the City of Trenton, N.J., now facing the layoffs of nearly one third of its police force, be approved for a Community Oriented Policing Hiring Grant during the final award period, which I understand to be soon—in late September 2011. This grant will help offset these mass layoffs that will surely endanger the safety of thousands of residents who rely on the police department for the security of their families, homes and neighborhoods.

Trenton, which has applied for the grant, is poised to lay off approximately 110 officers in September due to budget cuts. This is a serious threat to the families of the city, as well as State workers, rail commuters, businesses and visitors who come to Trenton, the capital of New Jersey. The grant seeks to support 18 officers at about \$4.3 million to implement the Directed Neighborhood Patrol Project, through which the Trenton Police Department will close down the streets in a selected neighborhood and place community policing officers in that neighborhood for eight hours a day for five days.

Trenton is a challenged urban area with 84,000 residents who live with the daily reality of a high crime rate. Trenton's well-documented gang problems have been featured on the History Channel in a 2010 documentary. There were 32 homicides in the city limits in 2009-2010. There are already 11 murders in the city this year. In Trenton, I fear there will be more violent crime if there are fewer police officers to keep law and order.

Today the number of officers on the job across the state is down by 3,000, more than 10 percent from last year, according to newspaper accounts. Correspondingly, during the same time we have seen a surge in violent crime. Homicides rose by 15 percent last year over 2009 levels, the first increase in four years. In Newark, N.J., 162 officers were laid off last November. Law enforcement officials reported that within two months, murders rose 50 percent, robberies 38

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percent, auto theft 40 percent, carjacking 400 percent, shooting incidents 66 percent, and victims of shootings, 118 percent.

Reductions in funding from the State and County, as well as its own fiscal crisis not uncommon to eastern cities, have the left the city struggling to sustain an adequate police force.

Let me close with **a horrifying but true story**. The fiancé of an officer shot and killed in my district earlier this year testified at a state hearing in Trenton that she could not fathom police layoffs. Kelly Walsifer was engaged to Patrolman Christopher Matlosz, who was shot as he sat in his police cruiser. Walsifer passionately testified on the effect of police layoffs on public safety. She said, "*The thought of laying off cops truly makes me sick to my stomach.*"

Nearly 235 years ago, the Battle of Trenton and its heroes turned the tide of the American Revolution and paved the way for the new nation. Today I humbly but earnestly ask that you, as the Director of COPS, assist us in this modern battle for Trenton to keep the city and its residents safe.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress