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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

June 4, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530

Attorney General Garland:

I have reviewed a press release which you issued last week, discussing a plan to reduce violent crime. As to the objective to reduce violent crime, we are in complete agreement. I hope that we will have opportunities to work together in this area.

Beginning in roughly June of 2020, there was a 30% spike in homicides correlated to a move to depolice our cities at the very time they were breaking out into violent riots. Shortly thereafter in July of 2020, former Attorney General Bill Barr launched Operation Legend, a surge of federal law enforcement assistance to state and local authorities to fight violent crime. As of December 31, 2020, Operation Legend had accounted for over 6,000 arrests nationwide, including over 450 for homicide. More than 2600 firearms have been seized and more than 32 kilos of heroin, 17 kilos of fentanyl, 300 kilos of methamphetamine, 135 kilos of cocaine and \$11 million in drug and other illicit proceeds have been seized. The Operation was a success. However it was discontinued by the Biden Administration.

I am concerned as I review your very different answer to the problem of rising violent crime. First, I must tell you it is extremely difficult to discern what you are committing to do at all. Your press release speaks of “earn[ing] legitimacy,” “invest[ing] in prevention,” and “target[ing] enforcement efforts” — inscrutable terms that could mean almost anything. Nonetheless, your use of terms about shifting attention to community-based programs and setting strategic enforcement priorities has led me believe your intention is to shift money and attention away from direct law enforcement to other priorities, in short, to defund the police.

In order to better understand your violent crime reduction policies, please answer the following no later than June 18, 2021:

1. Please define “community-based prevention and intervention programs.”
2. How much money does the Department intend to spend on “community-based prevention and intervention programs”?
3. How much money does the Department plan to spend researching, rather than combatting, violent crime?
4. When the Department “sets strategic enforcement priorities,” toward which criminal behavior will the Department direct fewer resources? Which behavior does the Department intend to ignore?
5. By directing the FBI and DEA to focus on only the most dangerous criminal organizations, what criminal conduct and which organizations will they be asked not to investigate?
6. How does the Department intend to “earn legitimacy” for law enforcement? Is it by reducing law enforcement presence, responsiveness to criminal activity, or imposing new restrictions on the actions of law enforcement officers? Please explain.
7. What metrics will the Department use to “measure results”?

If you have any questions, you may contact Erin Creegan of my Committee Staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary