



MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS

MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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April 17, 2007

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Representative:

The Major Cities Chiefs write to express our support for HR 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act (LLEHCPA). Hate crime merits a priority response because of its special impact on victims. These crimes – designed to intimidate whole communities on the basis of personal and immutable characteristics – can spark widespread neighborhood conflicts and damage the fabric of our society, especially in major metropolitan cities across our country. In partnership with community-based organizations, the law enforcement community has played a leadership role in supporting hate crime penalty-enhancement and data collection initiatives and continues to urge passage of this important legislation.

State and local law enforcement authorities have a large stake in the passage of HR 1592. The measure would provide authority for local law enforcement officials to request technical, forensic, prosecutorial or other forms of assistance in crime investigation from the Department of Justice for violence motivated by prejudice based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Specifically, this measure would give local law enforcement officials important tools to combat violent, bias-motivated crime. Federal support, through training or direct access, will help ensure that bias-motivated violence is effectively investigated and prosecuted. The legislation would also facilitate federal investigations and prosecutions when local authorities are unwilling or unable to achieve a just result.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist incidents, crime-fighting partnerships between federal and state and local authorities is more important than ever. While state and local authorities investigate and prosecute the overwhelming majority of hate crime cases, and the federal government can be expected to continue to defer

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2

to state authorities after the enactment of the LLEHCPA, it is important to law enforcement to have the tools they need to combat such a divisive act as a hate crime.

Police officials across the country have come to appreciate the law enforcement and community benefits of tracking hate crime and responding to it in a priority fashion. Law enforcement officials now more than ever understand that they can advance police-community relations by demonstrating a commitment to be both tough on hate crime perpetrators and sensitive to the special needs of hate crime victims.

Police executives should seek opportunities to speak out against bigotry, intolerance and prejudice in our society. It is hard to overstate the importance of outspoken leadership in opposition to all forms of bigotry. Civic leaders set the tone for the national discourse and have an essential role in shaping attitudes. It is for these reasons and more that MCC supports passage of HR 1592.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darrel W. Stephens" followed by a horizontal line.

Darrel W. Stephens, President
Major Cities Chiefs