Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2016

The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

We write you again to request a meeting as soon as possible so that together we can work towards resolving our nation's epidemic of black men being shot dead by police officers.

As our chief law enforcement officer in the United States, you are in the position to shape the national conversation from big cities to small towns and lead us towards change in attitudes and practices of law enforcement agencies. As Members of Congress, we hear from our constituents every single day about gun violence, police, the use of force, and racial profiling. As representatives from Chicago, we struggle to adequately respond to the concerns and suffering of our constituents—gun violence deaths are so commonplace that every weekend the number of children killed could fill an entire classroom. Tragedy after tragedy, we are called upon to help end the senseless violence by passing federal legislation, but as we have seen in the wake of the most recent mass shooting in Orlando, our Republican colleagues have no interest in addressing this dire issue. Despite this, we cannot sit idly by, but we need your help. Now, in the aftermath of the murders of Philando Castile by the police in Falcon Heights, Minnesota and of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (and just like the murder of Laquan McDonald by a Chicago police officer and countless other individuals), we turn to you and the DOJ as a clear partner in this endeavor so that no more lives are lost at the hands of the police.

In the aftermath of the video of Laquan McDonald's murder we wrote to you on December 9, 2015 to request a meeting in Chicago to not only discuss the DOJ's investigation into the Chicago Police Department (CPD) but also to engage in a conversation with us and our constituents throughout Chicago to work towards a restoration of trust and the fostering of much-needed transparency.

While we thank you for visiting the city of Chicago at such a dark time and for pursuing the investigation, we continue to urge you to engage with us, the federal leaders, to craft a federal response. State by state, city by city, and county by county we might make this reform or that reform, but there is no national strategy to stop police from killing people—especially black people, especially black men.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

The statements by Valerie Castile, Philando Castile's mourning mother, have added urgency to our need to act. Why must she begin describing her son with the statement that "he was not a thug" and "he is calm?" Philando's mother described how she made every effort to teach her son how to comply with and deescalate tense situations with law enforcement. He had a permit to carry a weapon which he announced to police. He passed the background check and went through the training to obtain the concealed carry permit. But he was shot dead in front of his loved ones. We are haunted by her words, "we are being hunted."

Today, our grief as a nation continues. Just last night, five innocent police officers were gunned down in cold blood as they protected the community of Dallas. We are horrified and deeply saddened by the proliferation of dangerous weapons and escalation of violence on our cities' streets. The deep veins of anger, hatred, distrust, and factionalism in America are frightening and violence is a daily result. We grieve the loss of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and the five police officers, who will not return to their mourning families. There is a corrosive wave of Americans hating each other and killing each other at alarming rates that we as a nation must come together to resolve and end.

We were moved by your remarks after the mass shooting on June 12th of 49 people at the Pulse Nightclub on Latin Night in Orlando. In particular, your message to our LGBT friends and family is particularly apt for the communities of color in Falcon Heights, Baton Rouge, and throughout the country: "And long after the cameras are gone, we will continue to stand with you as we grow together, in commitment, in solidarity and in equality." As weeks and months pass and turn into years, the numbers of precious lives senselessly lost continue to rise. Cameras thankfully have exposed injustice and shine a light on communities mourning and protesting, but we must hold fast to our resolve to prevent another Ferguson, Chicago, Falcon Heights, or Baton Rouge even when the cameras are gone.

We look forward to meeting with you and working with you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress

Robin Kelly
Member of Congress