



**Attn:** President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice  
145 N Street, N.E. 11th Floor, Washington, DC 20530

**Re:** Public Comments on Community Policing and Crime Reduction

**Submitted by:** The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

**Date:** February 9, 2015

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The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is honored that Melissa Jones, senior program officer with our Boston office, will testify at the fourth public listening session of the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing on the topic of Community Policing and Crime Reduction. The following comments expound on her verbal testimony scheduled for February 13<sup>th</sup> in Phoenix.

If you have any questions, please contact Julia Ryan, Community Safety Initiative Director, at (212) 455-1618 or [jryan@lisc.org](mailto:jryan@lisc.org).

#### **About LISC**

Established in 1979, [LISC](http://lisc.org) is the nation's largest non-profit community development support organization, dedicated to helping community residents transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy places of choice and opportunity. With local offices in 30 cities and partners throughout Rural America, LISC mobilizes corporate, government and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with loans, grants and equity investments; local, statewide and national policy support; and technical and management assistance.

LISC's leadership in rebuilding neighborhoods challenged by crime and poverty has been well recognized by the White House. We have been particularly proud to contribute to the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative in our role as the national technical assistance provider for the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program since 2012.

In that work and over our 35 year history, we have championed the power that community developers wield to reduce crime – by rehabilitating problem properties, by building collective efficacy among residents, and by creating economic opportunity in places where hope is in short supply. Our strategy for deploying those resources to complement progressive, evidence-based law enforcement strategies has yielded sustained improvements in safety in cities as diverse as Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Providence.

## **Recommendations: Reengineering Community Policing**

LISC believes that community-oriented policing should be the dominant framework for policy and practice in police departments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our recommendations in this area are:

***(A) Expand support for community policing programs and policies that emphasize collaborative problem-solving to improve community safety and vitality.***

Community policing approaches should facilitate crime prevention and intervention, not just suppression. This is critical to help community members see police as allies as opposed to an occupying force, and to create more economically and socially stable neighborhoods.

Community policing approaches should also facilitate police problem-solving with agencies and organizations outside of the justice system. Our experience has shown that partnerships between police and strong community development groups in particular can help improve social connectivity and economic strength, both of which foster resilience against crime. The results of this kind of approach are documented in hundreds of [case studies](#) available in LISC's online Community Safety Resource Center ([www.lisc.org/csi](http://www.lisc.org/csi)), and in the COPS book, *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships* by Bill Geller and Lisa Belsky.

***(B) Expand resources for training police officers and community leaders in problem-solving methods and partnership-building.***

Traditional police training does not necessarily prepare officers and commanders to engage in problem-solving and harness the resources of partner organizations to address crime. Investment in training, particularly for mid-level commanders and executives, on how to build and sustain partnerships across sectors and with community leaders is important, as is joint training for community leaders and police to establish a common language and methodology for examining crime problems.

LISC has worked with dozens of police departments using training materials on developer-police partnerships produced with support from BJA. In partnership with Gregory Saville of AlterNation LLC, we have run [SafeGrowth](#) courses in ten cities which have paired police officers with community developers, service providers, residents and other local leaders to tackle crime problems using expanded principles of [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design](#). Grounded in research on environmental criminology and collective efficacy, these efforts offer promising models for how we can create a common understanding and ownership of problem-solving across police and communities, with powerful results. A forthcoming LISC curriculum on developer-police partnerships (supported by COPS) will add to the library of products which warrant support for wider implementation.

## **Recommendations: Building Systems Partnerships**

***(C) Expand federal support for comprehensive, neighborhood-based efforts to reduce crime and interconnected challenges of poverty and disinvestment.***

Problems such as clustered vacant properties and blight, failing schools and unemployment not only drive crime, but they also fuel the disillusionment and distrust of government that damage

efforts to build police legitimacy. Investment in comprehensive efforts that address the interconnected challenges of high crime, high poverty neighborhoods is critical. In particular, programs such as Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation and others under the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative are a critical step forward to strengthening communities holistically, creating an environment more conducive to collaborative community-police problem-solving and trust-building.

***(D) Integrate the efforts of agencies at the federal level to build the capacity of trusted community groups in high crime, high poverty neighborhoods.***

Communities with persistently high crime and violence are also often characterized by low social cohesion and collective efficacy. It is extraordinarily difficult for police to effectively and efficiently build collaborative relationships in such neighborhoods. Building the capacity of community groups – those that are trusted by residents and can serve as honest brokers in managing community-police relations – is therefore imperative to make community-oriented policing work. Many of the most effective programs in this arena, such as the Capacity Building for Community Development and Affordable Housing Program (HUD Section 4) or the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (administered by BJA) require coordination at the federal level to ensure that robust funding is directed to the neighborhoods where police need them most.

***(E) Support meaningful engagement of community leaders in data-driven and evidence-informed decision-making by law enforcement leaders and policymakers.***

Research-informed and community-oriented decision-making need not be mutually exclusive. Police and other local officials need resources and support to help translate data and evidence such that community leaders can provide informed and productive guidance in selection of crime-fighting strategies for their neighborhoods. The [Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program](#) offers one example for how local researchers and law enforcement leaders are pursuing this approach by involving community groups and resident leaders as key stakeholders in decision-making teams working to reduce crime in long-term hot spots.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment. LISC looks forward to continuing to contribute to the Task Force's important mission.

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**Melissa Jones, Senior Program Officer, LISC  
Bio for February 13<sup>th</sup> Listening Session Testimony**

Melissa Jones is a Senior Program Officer with the Boston office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, one of the nation's largest community development support organizations. She supports low-income neighborhoods throughout Boston in engaging residents and other community leaders to develop comprehensive Quality of Life Investment Plans that guide economic development, education, safety and health initiatives. In this role, Melissa has also supported community-police partnerships citywide, including several that have earned national recognition for how they have linked policing with neighbor organizing and problem property abatement, yielding results in the form of sustained crime reduction as well as enhanced community-police trust. Previously, Melissa served as the Community Transformation Director at Youth Uprising, East Oakland's largest youth development center, and in city government in

the Cities of Oakland and Alameda. Melissa holds a Masters in Public Administration from California State University, East Bay and a BA from Northeastern University. She is a Doctoral Candidate in Governance and Policy Analysis at United Nations University-MERIT and Maastricht Graduate School of Governance.