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Honorable Hugh Addonizio
Mayor of City of Newark
Newark City Hall
Newark, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Mayor:

I am writing to you as President of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey in connection with the recent proposal by Dan Anthony that a Police Review Board be established. As you perhaps know, I have had the honor to represent legally, the New Jersey State P.B.A. and through the years various local P.B.A. groups, as well as many individual policemen in disciplinary and other proceedings. I am as sensitive to the problems of the average undermanned and comparatively underpaid patrolman, as any individual in the State. On the other hand, there hardly exists a day in which complaints are not made to the American Civil Liberties Union about episodes of alleged police brutality. I have thus been made equally aware of both sides of the problem.

The American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey has discussed over a period of years the problems raised by the conflicts which seem to arise between efficient police methods, and the constitutional rights of suspected offenders, especially where members of minority groups are involved. The American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey has published a pamphlet, describing both in English and in Spanish, persons rights when facing arrest. The recognition of the duties and obligations of the enforcer can be seen by the advice given that arrests should not be resisted. On the other hand, the numbers and frequency of complaint about mistreatment are too staggering to permit a cursory dismissal of these claims. I do not mean to assert that Newark has an excessive number of such complaints. Many other communities in the State face similar problems, but I think Newark with its metropolitan complex of peoples is uniquely situated to attempt a solution. For this reason, we wholeheartedly support Mr. Anthony's proposal to establish a Police Review Board. I hasten to add that the Police Review Board which the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey contemplates is not intended to be a Board solely for the purpose of disciplining policemen.

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It is rather intended to demonstrate to the community at large what the problems of law enforcement in a large urban community are. It is quite obvious that in the recent election, your own progressive and sympathetic understanding of minority problems during your congressional career, contributed significantly to the staggering proportion of your victory over an administration which many people felt had lost touch with the sensitivities and tensions inevitably arising in a city of Newark's character. The appointment by you of an understanding group of citizens, whose obligation it would be to study the problem of law enforcement from the standpoint of minimizing the aggression, without impeding the efficiency of law enforcement, and at the same time in its study of the problem involved, represent all groups in the community, so that the difficulties of the problems would become apparent, would be a splendid beginning towards solving a constant irritant in the community.

I do not at this time attempt, and it would be foolish to make such an attempt, to detail what I think specific obligations of such a Review Board should be, but I think the very fact that a forum had been constituted, wherein complaints might be registered, would have a salutary effect in demonstrating that your administration was not callously indifferent to the problem.

Cordially yours,

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Emil Oxfeld

cc: Hon. Dominick L. Spina, Police Commissioner, Police Headquarters,
Newark, New Jersey.

cc: Mr. Daniel S. Anthony, Chairman of the Newark Human Rights Commission,
Newark City Hall, Newark, New Jersey