March 22, 2021

The Honorable Hilda L. Solis
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
856 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisor Solis:

FUNDING REQUEST FOR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT COMPLIANCE

This letter is to apprise you of ongoing efforts to achieve sustained compliance in accordance with the settlement agreement between the Los Angeles County (County) Sheriff’s Department (Department) and the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) entered into on April 28, 2015. The agreement was intended to address allegations of biased policing which were brought to the Department’s attention by the DOJ after an investigation into the policing practices in the Antelope Valley (AV). The specific stations identified by the DOJ were Palmdale and Lancaster, both under the command of the Department’s North Patrol Division.

The settlement agreement contains mandated reforms which involve nearly all aspects of the Department’s operations. Neutral third party monitors, paid by the Department, assist in achieving compliance with the agreement and prepare semi-annual reports for the court regarding the Department’s compliance efforts. A required Compliance Coordinator, organizes and implements reforms as directed by the Sheriff and communicates data to the parties. A “Compliance Team” was approved in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16 budget to address the substantial work of compliance.

In the FY 20-21 budget, the Board approved additional personnel for the AV stations’ compliance activities. The Department works with the monitoring team, DOJ, and the local communities toward compliance with the reform measures. Although the pace of activities is regularly questioned, qualitative improvement in the policing practices of the AV stations has been recognized by all parties involved in the agreement.
An assessment of compliance measures indicates there is a need for additional personnel within the Compliance Team. The Department is requesting funding for a Crime Analyst and an Operations Assistant II. Both positions are critical to the successful implementation of reforms. The estimated cost is $256,000 annually. Additionally, audits and critiques of risk management systems presented to the Department by the DOJ has highlighted needs to address management accountability and risk management issues. The sheer volume of administrative documentation generated by the two AV stations coupled with the highlighted quality control deficit have put the County in a precarious position. In order to mitigate this pending risk, the Department is asking for funding to support two lieutenant positions, one at each station, in addition to the current staffing. These lieutenant positions will be used to ensure quality control of all risk management documentation generated from the stations. The estimated cost for both positions is $580,000 annually.

The Department is committed to continue its progress toward full and sustained compliance with the settlement agreement. Should the continued efforts to achieve compliance to the settlement agreement falter due to staffing shortages and/or risk management documentation, the Department as well as the County may become liable to additional litigation and statutory sanctions from the federal government. The cost of litigation and potential fines will far outweigh the cost of staffing the proposed positions.

Should you have any questions, please contact Chief Dennis M. Kneer, North Patrol Division, at [Redacted]

Sincerely,

[Signature]
ALEX VILLANUEVA
SHERIFF