



NEWS RELEASE

Chicago Police Department

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Prepared Testimony of Interim Superintendent of Police John Escalante December 15, 2015

Good morning. Thank you Chairman, Committee Chairs, the Committees on Public Safety and Human Relations, and the other members of the council for the opportunity to address you today.

I recognize the seriousness of the events that brought us together today and welcome the opportunity to answer your questions about some of the most important issues facing the Chicago Police Department and the City of Chicago.

As a lifelong resident of the City and a 29-year veteran of the Police Department, I care about our future and the future of the men and women of the Chicago Police Department.

As the Mayor acknowledged in his speech last week, an independent panel of industry experts along with the United States Justice Department have begun their work to closely scrutinize our policies and practices.

Like the Mayor, I welcome these investigations and pledge the full cooperation of my office and the entire Department.

I believe it will make our department stronger and better, it will help rebuild trust in the men and women who work hard as officers every day, and ultimately make us better at fighting crime and keeping our communities safe.

We as a department must confront these challenges, and in this role I intend to lead us forward.

First, I've taken steps to make our Department more diverse. I understand how important it is that the police force reflects the diversity of the communities we serve and you have my commitment that I will do what I can to ensure we reach that goal. First, we are in the middle of a recruitment campaign designed to ensure our department draws on the strengths of the entire city. The fact

is, it is impossible to diversify our ranks and our leadership, if people aren't applying in the first place.

We also made a series of promotions and transfers that bring the diversity of our command ranks to historic levels. Let me be clear, every single person who was promoted was promoted on their merits and because they deserved the job. With that said, I am proud that for the first time in recent history, 50% of our senior command staff members are African American and I've elevated several talented female commanders to leadership positions.

Next, we have made it clear to the officers in our department that while technology may be an obstacle to fully functioning dashboard cameras, any officer who knowingly turns off the audio function or otherwise does not follow department policy related to this equipment will face discipline. And we are beefing up inspections of that equipment.

In that light, today, I am here to say unequivocally that we as department cannot and will not tolerate officers who lie or cover up the misdeeds of others in the course of their duty. It is simply unacceptable.

We have to be honest that there are those in the police department who are afraid to speak up for fear of retribution, or being labeled an outcast.

But we also have to be clear that the difference between speaking up and staying silent is the difference between right and wrong.

We have a policy on the books but to be frank, the enforcement of that policy has not been effective.

So let me be clear - any officer who lies in the course of their duty, who files false case reports in the course of their duty, or who covers up the bad actions of others must and will face termination.

We cannot allow that kind of culture to exist in our department.

With all that said, I want to recognize that while we face real challenges that must be addressed, we also have thousands of good men and women in this department who put their lives on the line each day in service to our city – all while upholding the values we hold dear.

I look forward to our time together today, and I look forward to working with you on this important issue in the days and weeks ahead.