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**TESTIMONY OF CHRIS BILAL – CAMPAIGN STAFF, STREETWISE AND SAFE**

MARCH 3, 2015 HEARING OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE ON

**EXAMINING COMMUNITY POLICING**

My name is Chris Bilal and I am campaign staff at Streetwise and Safe, a youth-driven organization that challenges the criminalization of LGBTQ youth through legal education, political advocacy, direct action and community education.

Our young leaders notice that all too often calls for community policing have been code for cash infusions into militarized police departments that have a history of selectively and arbitrarily enforcing laws and using violence against the LGBTQNC community. We call on City Council to invest in community initiatives and 1000 beds for homeless youth instead of a 1000 more cops. Strong communities and community policing can't exist where broken windows policing flourishes. We ask that the council divest from broken windows policing instead of investing more money into it.

LGBTQNC youth of color know that buzzwords like community policing are talking points that ring weak and hollow, especially when LGBTQNC folks are constantly profiled based on our sexual orientation, strip-searched to determine our gender identity, and are subject to having condoms seized from us at the slightest furtive movement in the city that is at the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS and epidemic.

Let's begin bettering community relations by actively listening to what community members have already asked for. After hearing the Garner verdict, communities marched in the streets and asked the City Council to pass the Right to Know Act. Having legislation that would require officers to secure objective proof of voluntary and informed consent for searches where there is no other legal justification should be considered basic to implementing a respectful and effective "community policing" plan. Having legislation that would require officers to identify themselves and the nature of the encounter would build trust and help prevent routine police encounters from escalating or taking on a gender and or sexually specific nature that damages any attempt at community policing.

True community policing can't occur if condoms are still being used as evidence of prostitution. True community policing requires that we expand the prohibition of the use of condoms from some to all prostitution related charges. Women of color, and especially transgender women of color, and LGBTQ youth of color are particularly hurt by this loophole and selective enforcement of the law. True community policing can occur by expanding and tightening the condoms operation order.

True community policing can't occur if we are still hearing complaints from our community that their preferred gender pronouns are being ignored or that they are being slurred by police officers. True community policing can't occur if we are still hearing stories of folks being searched to determine their gender, or if we are still hearing complaints that transgender and gender nonconforming people do not feel safe in police custody. We ask that the Inspector General investigate the implementation of changes made to the NYPD patrol guide in 2012, with the leadership of now Councilmember Menchaca, to address

these violations. We have a right to know not only if the trainings are being done, but if the changes are actually being followed.

Ending Broken Windows Policing, passing the Right To Know Act, enforcing changes to the Patrol Guide regarding the respectful treatment of transgender New Yorkers, and expanding the operations order on condoms should be considered basic to implementing a respectful and effective “community policing” plan that respects the rights of our LGBTQ communities.