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March 10, 2015

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

On behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, I am writing to support the petition of 19,000 community leaders and residents of Denver, Colorado for the U.S. Department of Justice to intervene in the investigation of the Denver Police Department's shooting of 17 year old Jessica Hernandez.

On January 26th, two Denver Police officers responded to an early-morning call of a suspicious vehicle parked in a side street. Inside the car were Hernandez and five of her friends. Acting on evidence that the car was stolen, the officers attempted to apprehend the teens. What happened next is unclear. We know that Jessica Hernandez attempted to drive away from the officers. We also know that Ms. Hernandez was killed by a bullet that entered her chest and leg. Finally, on February 28th, we now know that an official autopsy ruled Hernandez's death a homicide. In 2008, the Denver Police Department adopted a policy of not shooting into moving vehicles – a statute that should have prevented Ms. Hernandez's death. No doubt, there is still a great deal of evidence that must be examined, and LULAC will remain vigilant in ensuring that justice is served.

Recent events in Ferguson and New York City have shed light on the relationship between communities of color and police departments around the country. Sadly, this relationship is often a deadly one. Colorado, in particular, has the 8th largest Hispanic population in the country. No doubt, this incident has profoundly touched the community. Not long after Ms. Hernandez's death, relatives, activists, and community leaders assembled for a candlelit vigil. Although local authorities have launched an investigation, the family and some residents are skeptical and have already circulated a petition to ask the Justice Department to investigate the Denver Police Department. Due to the sensitive, racial thread of this case, we ask the Justice Department to embark upon a thorough, transparent, and fair investigation of the facts. No doubt, missteps in the handling of this case will cause more community unrest. Therefore, we feel that a federal response would be appropriate in ensuring healing and justice for all parties involved.

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As a civil rights organization, LULAC champions policies that help improve conditions for Latinos -- including the right to live without fear of the police. That being said, police forces have done much to help keep our communities safe, and we recognize the grave sacrifice they make every day. I look forward to future in where young people like Jessica Hernandez live past the age of seventeen – a future in where we work together for safe cities and a just society. For more information, please feel free to have your staff contact Luis Torres, LULAC Director of Policy and Legislation, at Latorres@LULAC.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Moran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret Moran
LULAC National President