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March 24, 2025

Chief Ryan Duffy
Newport Police Department
120 Broadway
Newport, RI 02840
rduffy@cityofnewport.com

VIA MAIL AND EMAIL

Dear Chief Duffy:

I am writing in response to media reports about a police encounter that took place during the City's St. Patrick's Day parade on March 15th, and about which you have since made public comments. Specifically, it concerns the arrest by a number of Newport Police officers of a 16-year-old parade attendee on disorderly conduct and related charges.

As you know, part of this police encounter was captured on video by a witness at the parade and posted on social media. The video has generated understandable concerns that the officers appear to be using excessive force in arresting the juvenile. However, within a few days, you determined that the level of force used on this teenager complied with Departmental policy and you then issued a public statement to that effect.

Obviously, the ACLU has not been privy to the information and documentation that you relied on in making this determination. However, we note that the statement you issued in justifying the officers' use of force did so without addressing any specifics as to how and why you came to that conclusion based on relevant departmental policy.

For instance, the private video clearly shows an officer grabbing the back of the juvenile's neck and forcibly taking him to the ground while the teenager was not offering any apparent resistance. Further, once the juvenile was on the ground, the same officer can be seen placing his hand on the back of his head and applying pressure to it, and perhaps even placing his knee on his head to keep him down.

We realize that the video does not capture the entire incident, but it nonetheless raises significant issues about officer compliance with the Department's use of force procedures. These procedures, as you know, emphasize the appropriateness of de-escalation and the discontinuance of force when resistance ceases. While your public statement on this incident describes the process that you and the Department employ to evaluate "use of force"

incidents, it does not explain *why* the force captured on the video was deemed reasonable based on the information you had available to review.

We therefore are writing to respectfully request that you provide a more detailed response to your statement that more specifically clarifies the reasons that you believe that the force used was reasonable under the departmental policy's "use of force" restrictions.¹ Such a clarification might be helpful in edifying others who share this concern about about the scope of your public statement. We trust you agree that the more transparency the better in dealing with incidents like these.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Brown" clearly distinguishable.

Steven Brown
Executive Director

cc: The Hon. Charles Holder, Mayor

¹ We are simultaneously filing with this letter an Access to Public Records Act request with your department to obtain the relevant documents regarding this episode. We are hopeful that, since all the information and footage being requested have already been reviewed by you, our accompanying APRA request for relevant documents can be fulfilled expeditiously.

