April 4, 2013

Senator Eddie Joe Williams
Chair, State Agencies & Government Affairs Committee
500 Woodlane Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Support for Senate Bill 1093
Racial Impact Statements

Dear Chairman Williams:

I am the Chief of Police of the Harrison Police Department and have been in law enforcement for more than thirty years. During my career, I have been involved in nearly all aspects of modern policing including patrol, criminal investigation, community service, internal affairs and training. I am a graduate of both the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas and the Southwestern Legal Institute.

I support Senate Bill 1093 and urge the committee to vote to move it out of the committee. Senate Bill 1093 is important to all Arkansans as a means to ensure that laws are not passed that have the unintentional consequences of impacting racial and ethnic minorities more harshly than white communities when the public safety concern can be achieved in ways that don’t have this result.

As the chief of police in Harrison and a member of the law enforcement community in Arkansas, I know that the criminal laws should be enforced without consideration of race or ethnicity. My officers are charged with doing so and have consistently met that charge. It is important, however, that our officers are seen as being even-handed in their law enforcement work. Belief that the laws we enforce affect one community more harshly than another undermines the trust we want and need all communities to have in us. That distrusts also compromises public safety.

If legislators know prior to passing a law that it will affect one community more harshly than another, the legislators will have an opportunity to review the purpose of the law and determine whether that purpose can be met in a way that does not have this affect. Law enforcement can be included in those discussions. This review and discussion will only build support for law enforcement in all communities in Arkansas.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Pat Murphy
Chief of Police
Harrison, Arkansas