

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION
February 7, 2017**

CONTACT:
Randy Bunnao, Communications Director
213-241-0227;
RBunnao@advancingjustice-la.org

**ADVOCACY GROUPS DEMAND TRANSPARENCY REGARDING L.A. MAYOR GARCETTI'S
RECENT "COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM" GRANT AWARD**

*Nearly \$1 Million Grant Awarded as Trump Administration Reportedly Planning to Shift Focus Exclusively to
'Islamic Extremism'*

LOS ANGELES - Today, a coalition of Los Angeles based civil rights and community groups issued a Public Records Act (PRA) request to Mayor Eric Garcetti seeking transparency about federal grants awarded to the City of Los Angeles totalling \$825,000, as part of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program. Recent news reports indicate that the Trump Administration intends to focus CVE on addressing domestic "Islamic Extremism."

"Given the gravity of President Trump's backdoor Muslim ban, it is important now more than ever that Mayor Garcetti remains open and honest about the nature and extent of the City's involvement in a program that we know very little about," says Laboni Hoq, litigation director at Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles. "We cannot help but believe that CVE programs will open the doors to further profiling of American Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim."

Alongside Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA), the groups seeking transparency from the Mayor's Office about the grants include the Council on American Islamic Relations of Greater Los Angeles Area (CAIR-LA), National Lawyers Guild (NLG-LA), the #VigilantLOVE Coalition, and American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California (ACLU SoCal).

On January 13, 2017, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) awarded the L.A. Mayor's Office of Public Safety \$825,000 in CVE funding, with nearly \$1.5 million in additional funding going to community and nonprofit groups operating in Los Angeles. The program is part of a \$10 million grant program initiated by the Obama administration that has awarded similar grants to governmental entities and community and nonprofit groups nationwide. In 2014, Los Angeles was identified as one of the CVE "pilot cities," along with Boston and Minneapolis. Since that time the City has been coordinating with federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, and community groups to develop its programming. However, in response to a separate Public Records Act issued by some of the same civil rights groups on August 3, 2015, the Mayor's Office and other City departments provided almost no information about its involvement in CVE.

Recent news reports indicate that the Trump administration intends to change or alter the CVE program in name and practice to focus exclusively on Islamist extremism. "The City's involvement in CVE has always

been problematic in light of CVE's false and stigmatizing core assumption that those who follow the Islamic faith are more prone to 'radicalization' than other religions or cultures," said Masih Fouladi of CAIR-LA. "Trump's campaign rhetoric demonizing the Muslim community, coupled with recent reports that the new Administration plans to focus CVE efforts solely on 'Islamic Extremism' only makes the program even more objectionable."

The PRA request seeks all information the City and its entities have regarding the grants issued in Los Angeles to both the Mayor's Office of Public Safety, as well to community and other non-profit groups that may be partnering with the City on CVE. Those who receive CVE grants will be subject to close oversight by DHS, which will closely monitor the programs by imposing measurement metrics, data gathering and reporting requirements, and likely other deliverables.

"We've been left mostly in the dark and need more clarity around the motivations and goals of the CVE program in Los Angeles," said Jessica Farris of the ACLU SoCal. "Besides the obvious civil liberty implications, we cannot in good conscience support a program that is discriminatory in nature and rife with the possibility of subjecting members of our communities to unwarranted scrutiny and abuse."

The CVE Grants were awarded in the closing days of the Obama Administration, and it is unclear whether the new DHS leadership has contacted the Grant recipients regarding their obligations under the Grant. However, in light of the Trump Administration's continued targeting of Muslim communities, including through the Executive Order issued on January 27, 2017, banning travel to the U.S. from seven Muslim majority countries, a number of grant recipients are planning to decline the CVE money. "We applaud groups who have taken a principled stance by declining CVE money and distancing themselves from an Administration who is continuing to sanction hostility toward Muslim communities through official government policy," said Ameena Qazi, Executive Director the National Lawyers' Guild - Los Angeles Chapter.

"In this time of national crisis and despair, as we watch the Trump administration attempt to unilaterally dismantle some of our bedrock Constitutional values including respect for religious freedom, we ask that the Mayor be transparent about its intentions about working with the Trump Administration through programs like CVE," said Sahar Pirzada, a member of the #VigilantLOVE Coalition, whose mission is to actively defend the safety and justice of the communities and individuals affected by Islamophobia in the Greater Los Angeles Area. "The public has a right to know about all of the details of the City's CVE programs, and to hold the City accountable for its involvement, particularly if it will, as we believe, play into harmful and stigmatizing stereotypes of the Muslim community."

For a copy of the Public Records Act submitted, please click [here](#).

###

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles is the nation's largest Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) legal and civil rights organization and serves more than 15,000 individuals and organizations every year. Founded in 1983 as the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Advancing Justice - LA's mission is to advocate for civil rights, provide legal services and education, and build coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. Through direct legal services, impact litigation, policy analysis and advocacy, leadership development and capacity building, Advancing Justice - LA seeks to serve the most vulnerable members of the AANHPI community while also building a strong AANHPI voice for civil rights and social justice.

