

Wednesday March 18, 2009

**Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi**  
**Statement on H.R. 1139, the COPS Improvement Act of 2009**  
**Judiciary Committee Markup**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to express my strong support for H.R. 1139. I also want to thank Congressman Weiner for introducing this bill, which has special meaning for me.

The Community Oriented Policing Services program—known as the COPS program—was created by Title I of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. I was Attorney General of Puerto Rico at the time and I am proud to have worked with the Clinton Administration to help secure passage of that bill. As someone whose own family has been deeply touched by violent crime, and who has spent countless hours talking with families that have been similarly affected, I am unyielding in my belief that the most basic human right a government owes to its citizens is the right to personal security.

Whether you live in Detroit, San Antonio, Queens, or San Juan, you deserve to feel safe in your home and in your community. The COPS program is rooted in this simple premise and has done much to make it a reality.

The mission of the COPS program is to enhance the security of our citizens. Under the program, the federal government awards grants to state and local law enforcement agencies so they can hire and train police officers, purchase and use new crime-fighting technologies, and develop innovative policing strategies. The \$1.25 billion in annual funding authorized by the amendment that Mr. Weiner offers today will enable law enforcement agencies to hire 10,000 new officers a year—and 50,000 officers over the life of the bill.

To date, over \$160 million in COPS grants have been awarded to law enforcement agencies in Puerto Rico. These grants have put more than 3,500 new police officers on Puerto Rico's streets.

Over \$6 million dollars have gone to improve safety for students and teachers in the Island's schools. About \$9 million dollars have been awarded for crime-fighting technology. Nearly every one of Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities has benefitted from COPS grants. These

statistics are heartening, but even they cannot adequately capture the impact that COPS funding has had for my constituents. The numbers of lives saved, the number of crimes prevented, and the number of families spared the pain of losing a loved one—these numbers are simply beyond calculation.

So thank you again, Mr. Weiner. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.