



Seattle Women's Commission

February 21, 2014

Chief Harry Bailey
610 Fifth Avenue
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Interim Chief Bailey:

One of the focuses of the Seattle Women's Commission's 2014 work plan is violence prevention, specifically reducing violence against women. The Seattle Police Department is probably the City agency with the most direct impact on domestic violence and sexual assault, and we truly appreciate SPD's efforts to reduce such crimes.

In preparing for 2014, we met with community members and service agencies to identify priorities within our Violence Prevention work. A concern that we often heard was that SPD officers could use additional cultural-competency training for working with immigrant and refugee women. We *know* that SPD officers want to provide these women with excellent service, and we would love to team up with SPD to make it so that all women see SPD officers as a safe, helpful resource. We look forward to further discussing this general topic over the next year.

However, there is one specific issue that we believe needs immediate attention. We have heard many reports of officers using family members—or even potential suspects—as interpreters in domestic-violence and sexual-assault investigations. As you are aware, this practice presents a number of potential problems: a victim may be reluctant to report specific details; the family member could provide inaccurate translation; and involving a family member may heighten the future safety risk for the victim and her family.

We realize that this is just anecdotal information. We also realize that the practice is occasionally necessary, but that limited resources may make it a more common occurrence. In order to better understand the issue, we would like more information about SPD's policies and protocols. What kind of training do SPD officers receive regarding working with victims who do not speak English? What are the SPD policies regarding interviewing such victims and witnesses? What

resources are available in the field? What resources would help SPD officers more effectively work through language barriers?

Thank you in advance for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Wendy Gillihan, Co-Chair
Seattle Women's Commission



Bridgette Maryman, Co-Chair
Seattle Women's Commission

cc: Patty Lally, Director, Seattle Office for Civil Rights