



February 14, 2019

The Honorable Hank Johnson
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Johnson:

I am writing in support of the “Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act of 2019,” which would bring important accountability and transparency to a government program that provides surplus military gear to law enforcement agencies. The Project On Government Oversight is an independent nonprofit organization that champions reforms to achieve a more effective, ethical, and accountable federal government that safeguards constitutional principles.

Under the Department of Defense 1033 Program, almost \$7 billion worth of surplus military gear has made it into the hands of thousands of state and local police departments, as well as federal law enforcement agencies.¹ Most of the items supplied to law enforcement are innocuous, such as blankets, furniture, and digital cameras. However, a substantial amount of weapons and military tactical vehicles have been transferred through the program.²

Oversight by Congress³ and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has exposed problems with the program.⁴ For example, the program does not ensure applicants receive adequate training to receive even high-value equipment or weapons. The program also lacks adequate internal controls to ensure only eligible agencies participate. A 2017 report underscored the need for improved oversight: GAO personnel were able to pose as a bogus federal law enforcement agency and receive equipment from the program.

¹ Law Enforcement Support Office, Defense Logistics Agency, LESO webpage, <https://www.dla.mil/DispositionServices/Offers/Reutilization/LawEnforcement/> (Downloaded February 12, 2019)

² RAND Corporation, *An Evaluation of the Department of Defense’s Excess Property Program*, Santa Monica: 2018, pp. xiv-xv.

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2400/RR2464/RAND_RR2464.pdf (Downloaded February 12, 2019)

³ Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Hearing on “Oversight of Federal Programs for Equipping State and Local Law Enforcement,” September 9, 2014.

<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/oversight-of-federal-programs-for-equipping-state-and-local-law-enforcement> (Downloaded February 13, 2019)

⁴ Government Accountability Office, *DOD Excess Property: Enhanced Controls Needed for Access to Excess Controlled Property* (GAO-17-532), July 18, 2017. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-532> (Downloaded February 12, 2019)

The bill would establish much-needed transparency and oversight for the DOD 1033 program. It also requires stronger accountability procedures, such as certification of necessary training for specialized weapons and equipment. And it would establish common-sense limitations on the types of equipment that can be transferred to civilian law enforcement, such as combat aircraft and explosives.

Therefore, I urge your Republican and Democratic colleagues to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Brian". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danielle" and the last name "Brian" written in a single continuous line.

Danielle Brian
Executive Director