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Yasmin Manners  
Deputy Attorney General  
California Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Enforcement Section  
300 South Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90013  
[Yasmin.Manners@doj.ca.gov](mailto:Yasmin.Manners@doj.ca.gov)

Stop Data Analysis Subcommittee  
[AB953@doj.ca.gov](mailto:AB953@doj.ca.gov)

RIPA Board and Stop Data Subcommittee,

By way of introduction, our names are Nathan Solomon, John Azevedo and Lorena Barrera and we serve on the [Community Advisory Council](#) (CAC), a civilian oversight body coordinating with the Sonoma County Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach (IOLERO) and the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office (SCSO). We also serve on an ad hoc committee (RIPA Ad Hoc) that has been conducting an analysis and research on racial and ethnic disparities in traffic and pedestrian stops conducted by SCSO. Our initial goal in our work was to acquire an understanding of SCSO's RIPA-related practices and to address potential biases that might be disclosed by the RIPA-related data. On March 5, 2025, the RIPA Ad Hoc presented a [final report](#) containing findings in the analyzed data including three recommendations informed by the findings and grounded in best practices for accountability, transparency, and community engagement. Our report was presented to SCSO as formal recommendations for his consideration and possible implementation. Through our work with Sheriff Engram, our Ad Hoc has some lessons learned and simple requests of your Board which we believe are common-sense suggestions to help improve RIPA data quality and usefulness for law enforcement and the public.

First, one of the missing data elements during the collection phase is the place of residence of the individual being stopped. We live in a county with very high tourism and as such there is some debate about the number of individuals who are stopped who are NOT county residents. Without data on the place of residence, some population groups result in significant over-representation in all stops relative to the proportion of those population groups for our county, ultimately misleading our residents on who from our county is being stopped in our county. Adding a simple checkbox with the question, "is the person stopped a resident of the county/jurisdiction?" would be very helpful for understanding the data going forward.

Second, the way the RIPA questions are written can be interpreted as an assumption that an officer is always stopping a person based on a perception or that an officer always has the ability to make a perception when that is not always the case (i.e. line of sight is actually

blocked, vehicle has blacked-out windows and windshield, distance from line of sight is very far). For example, the RIPA questions on officer perception require a response and don't include anything asking if the race/ethnicity, gender or age were known before the stop. A question asking "did you know the race/ethnicity, age or gender of the person stopped prior to initiating contact?" with a yes or no option can be helpful. A yes response would require the officer to select all that apply (either race/ethnicity, age or gender). While we understand officers are required to fill out the perception questions determined by the RIPA Board, our suggested question would simply help understand the various independent variables that impact a traffic stop aside from an officer's perception.

Third, we believe that the race-based questions that appear on the RIPA form should have the same race/ethnicity options as are provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Aligning the options would clear up some of the grey area in data collection and interpretation that waters down the entire process.

Fourth, in our research, we noted inconsistencies across jurisdictions in how RIPA data is collected, stored, shared, reviewed, analyzed, and used. Factors contributing to these inconsistencies include (1) variations in data collection methods, such as the use of different applications and software; (2) differences in how data is submitted; (3) variations in agency policies governing data practices; and (4) the flexibility allowed under DOJ requirements. These factors can result in varying interpretations of the data once collected, further complicating efforts to identify trends or ensure accountability. We believe the RIPA committee should offer 'best practices' to the law enforcement agencies of California in terms of data governance and quality practices. In our county, the Sheriff's office doesn't have the budget to perform data analysis, but they should be made aware of the basic tenets of data collection and preservation.

Our Ad Hoc thanks you for your work on eliminating racial and identity profiling, and improving diversity and racial and identity sensitivity in law enforcement through your service on the RIPA Board. We hope that you consider these suggestions for a better data collection process in the near future as this would be a critical step toward understanding and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in law enforcement practices.

Sincerely,

Nathan Solomon, John Azevedo, and Lorena Barrera  
*IOLERO, CAC RIPA Ad Hoc Committee*