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June 8, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOPD: Now is the time for DA Torrez to use his power to demand accountability, BCSO body cameras

ALBUQUERQUE — The New Mexico Law Offices of the Public Defender today formally calls on 2nd District Attorney Raúl Torrez to join in demanding Bernalillo County Sheriff Manny Gonzales mandate body cameras for his deputies. In the event that the sheriff refuses, we call on Torrez to decline to prosecute certain Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office cases until Sheriff Gonzalez accepts accountability and transparency.

“While Torrez does not have direct control over the sheriff, he has complete control over which cases he chooses to prosecute,” said Jonathan Ibarra, LOPD public defender. “This might be the only pressure Sheriff Gonzales will heed to enact change.”

LOPD proposes Torrez refuse to prosecute cases in which deputies claim to be victims but for which they do not provide lapel video because of department policy. These types of cases include civilians charged with battery on a police officer, resisting arrest or assault on an officer.

The refusal to prosecute these limited types of case, which would not affect civilian victims of crime, is directly in line with DA Torrez’s public promise to hold police accountable and make systemic change.

“DA Torrez, we ask that you recognize and use the power you have to make the changes this community demands,” said Albuquerque District Defender Jennifer Barela.

LOPD makes this call to action today as public defenders around the nation march to honor the memory of George Floyd. Floyd was killed in a police confrontation that was caught on video, allowing the transparency needed for that community to hold its police accountable.

There is no reason Bernalillo County and all New Mexico residents should not have the same transparency. So in addition to calling on Torrez for immediate action, LOPD today also commits to working for a statewide body camera law in the next legislative session.

Leaders at LOPD, which is the state agency responsible for providing legal representation to indigent defendants in New Mexico, will be available for comment and further information following the public defender protest in front of Metro Court today at 1 p.m. The formal letter to DA Torrez and Sheriff Gonzales will be available from LOPD PIO Maggie Shepard following the march.

For more information, contact LOPD media contact Maggie Shepard by text/phone at (505) 690-4529 or maggie.shepard@lopdm.us. LOPD can be found at www.lopdm.us