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PRESS RELEASE

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Stephanie A. Miner, Mayor
Frank L. Fowler, Chief of Police

For Immediate Release

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Truce Project Launched in the City Of Syracuse

Federal grant supports gang violence reduction initiative

Press Conference

Wednesday, February 27

6:30 PM

Syracuse Public Safety Building, 5th Floor Auditorium

A press briefing on the Syracuse Truce Project will be held on Wednesday, February 27th at 6:30 PM in the 5th floor Auditorium of the Public Safety Building. Law enforcement partners, service providers and members of the community will be in attendance at this press briefing. The media is encouraged to attend.

Syracuse Mayor Stephanie A. Miner, United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian, Onondaga County District Attorney William J. Fitzpatrick and Syracuse Police Chief Frank L. Fowler today announced that Syracuse has taken an important step to address the serious violence that has plagued our city: the official launch of Syracuse Truce—an evidence-based strategy designed to significantly reduce gang and group related homicides and non-fatal shootings in Syracuse. Syracuse Truce is a collaboration between law enforcement and community service agencies that will infuse the area with a new standard of zero-tolerance regarding gun violence. The project is an outgrowth of the federal Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative in the Northern District of New York. Through collaboration with the United States Attorney's Office, the Gifford Foundation is the recipient of a \$300,000 federal

grant that will fund this initiative. This project is one of nine awarded nationally from the U.S. Department of Justice's Violent Gang and Gun Crime Reduction Program.

Syracuse Truce is based on a program model that has proven effective in other cities, significantly reducing gun violence and homicides. Boston documented a 63% reduction in youth homicides with their similar Cease Fire initiative; Cincinnati saw a 41% reduction in group-involved homicides and a 22% reduction in shootings. Lowell, MA, experienced a 40% reduction in homicides and a 43% reduction in gun assaults. All after implementing a model like Syracuse Truce.

This gang violence reduction initiative is based on *focused deterrence*. It is implemented through focusing increased enforcement activities on the small number of offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate share of gun violence, particularly the members of local violent groups/gangs. This increased enforcement is coupled with the provision of services needed to change lives, such as vocational training, employment assistance, substance abuse treatment and counseling.

United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian supports the Syracuse Truce initiative whole-heartedly. "The success of focused deterrence has been demonstrated in other cities. The message is clear – continued violence will result in a range of sanctions on the entire group causing the violence. The offers of assistance and services for offenders, on the other hand, provide a unique opportunity for gang members to change their lives for the better. I commend all those who are involved in this initiative. We are committed to making Syracuse a safer place to live."

"Through initiatives emphasizing focused deterrence, we have seen other cities reduce crime significantly," said Syracuse Mayor Stephanie A. Miner. "This is a top priority of my administration. I want to thank the law enforcement organizations and community groups who come together to work with the Syracuse Police Department to launch this initiative. I am confident that this community-based effort combining tough enforcement with outreach will help assure a safer and more secure environment across Syracuse."

"The people of Syracuse deserve to be safe" said Syracuse Police Chief Frank Fowler. "Syracuse Truce's objective is to dramatically and quickly reduce the frequency of street violence in Syracuse and continually reduce the frequency over time. Syracuse Truce has coordinated multiple law enforcement agencies, service providers, and community members to ensure that those who participate in violent groups receive due consequences and those who choose to transition to a nonviolent lifestyle receive the appropriate services in the most effective, efficient, and respectful manner possible."

Tim Jennings-Bey the Director of the Syracuse Trauma Response Team states "We are in the business of the preservation of life. This community collaboration is just the beginning of our efforts to deter gun violence and to offer viable solutions to create a healing process for our Syracuse community and those directly affected by the violence caused by guns."

The Syracuse Truce initiative compels the violent offender to make a choice: Commit another gun crime and every available law enforcement resource will be brought to bear on the entire gang responsible for that violence **OR** take advantage of the services, mentors and community agencies offering help to change, get jobs, secure a home, get counseling and lead a better life.

Syracuse Truce is based on a careful analysis of what is causing violence in Syracuse. The violence in Syracuse is driven by a very small population of people – less than 1% of the population – involved in drug crews, gangs, and other street groups. Syracuse Truce directly focuses on the individuals engaged in this behavior.

Gang/crew/group members are warned, through direct communication, of the enforcement regime: what will happen if gun violence occurs, and why the community wants it to stop. A key communication mechanism is a face-to-face meeting called a "Truce Notification."

Today, the Syracuse Truce partnership met with members of actively violent groups in the city of Syracuse in the first face-to-face Truce Notification. Community members told them that their lives matter and stressed that gun homicides must stop. They were informed that future violence will bring heightened local, state, and federal enforcement efforts on entire groups for all crimes they are committing. Additionally, they were offered specially tailored help to change their lives through a group of service providers. They need to decide which path to take.

An important strategy of Syracuse Truce includes "collective accountability". Those who commit gun homicides are held individually responsible, as always through criminal prosecution, but in addition, the entire shooter's group is held collectively accountable for the gun violence. This alters the criminal group dynamics in socially beneficial ways. No individual's rights are violated. But the offenses of group members receive high priority. This is a matter of strategically focusing resources where they can have the greatest benefit. Group members are also invited to take advantage of services that can help them change their lives for the better. The Salvation Army leads a consortium of providers and serves as a single point-of-contact for these services.

Syracuse Truce reflects twin goals of the initiative: to reduce violent conflict among groups and to foster positive relations between the community and law enforcement. It was initially formed last spring by a group of partners – the United States Attorney's Office, the Mayor's Office, the Syracuse Police Department, the Onondaga District Attorney's Office, the Salvation Army, the John Finn Institute, the Gifford Foundation and other law enforcement and social service agencies – that recognized the focused deterrence model as an effective evidence-based approach to gun and gang violence. The group prepared what later proved to be a successful grant application for support from the Department of Justice under its Violent Gang and Gun Crime Reduction Program.

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