August 22, 2014

Dear Mayor Knowles:

The events following the tragic death of Mike Brown on August 9th have brought to light the depths of the discord felt by many of the residents of Ferguson. It is no longer possible to pretend there is not a racial divide in your community. Equally evident is that the relationship between residents and police is stained with fear and anxiety. The situation is not improving.

As a community of advocates, we are aware that the vast majority of negative interactions with police in your community stem not from the investigation of violent crime but from traffic stops and warrant checks. The City of Ferguson has more warrants than residents. Most of these warrants are from unpaid fines for non-violent offenses. For many young people, these warrants act as a barrier to employment and housing. Just as importantly, the psychological trauma of spending each day subject to arrest and incarceration is debilitating.

As a first step toward reconciliation within your community, we urge you to exercise your mayoral clemency power under RSMo. 77.3601 to do the following:

- Remit all outstanding fines from non-violent offenses in their entirety and cancel any warrants associated with those offenses.
- Pardon all pending unassessed cases alleging non-violent offenses and recall any warrants associated with those cases.

Such a gesture of reconciliation would provide a fresh start for the citizens of Ferguson and indicate your recognition of the healing that must take place in your community.

Sincerely,

John Ammann
Professor of Law

Stephen Hanlon
Professor of Law
The mayor shall have power to remit fines and forfeitures and to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses arising under ordinances of the city; but this section shall not be so construed as to authorize the mayor to remit any costs which may have accrued to any officer of the city by reason of any prosecution under the laws or ordinances of said city. RSMo. 77:360