FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CONTACT: Julie Biehl (312-503-2386)
Nov. 3, 2016 Stephanie Kollmann (312-503-1479)

“Building a Safe Chicago” report: Attack root causes of violence with a comprehensive crime prevention plan

CHICAGO – More than two dozen community groups and criminal justice reform advocates on Thursday issued a report urging Chicago’s elected leaders to reject reactionary and unproven crime fighting policies and instead attack the root causes of violence with a comprehensive crime prevention plan.

“Building a Safe Chicago” argues against mandatory minimum prison sentencing schemes and in favor of a comprehensive plan that should include:

• Expansion of community-based programs to improve social conditions that have led to increased demand for illegal weapon possession;
• Reduction in illegal handgun availability by regulating gun shop owners;
• Reduction in gun possession charges by identifying and addressing the causes of the repeat offenses;
• Enactment of the reforms advocated by Mayor Emanuel’s Police Accountability Task Force; and
• Economic development initiatives in high poverty neighborhoods.

“An intelligent and equitable public safety strategy will realign public spending priorities to channel resources into strengthening — not suppressing — citizens most at risk, while paying special attention to reducing opportunity gaps across all public services,” according to the report. “Doing so will create a smarter, healthier, more stable and productive Illinois – and a safer Chicago.”

The full text of “Building a Safe Chicago” is available on the website of the Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law (http://www.law.northwestern.edu/legalclinic/cfjc/).

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Organizations signing on to “Building a Safe Chicago” include the following:

American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois
Aids Foundation of Chicago
Chicago Alliance against Sexual Exploitation
Children & Family Justice Center, Bluhm Legal Clinic, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law
Communities United
Community Renewal Society
Criminal & Juvenile Justice Project, Mandel Legal Aid Clinic, University of Chicago Law School
Earthheart
Enlace Chicago
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Illinois African American Coalition for Prevention
Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership
Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy
Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence
Illinois Justice Project
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs
Juvenile Justice Initiative
Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO)
Mikva Challenge Juvenile Justice Council
Mikva Challenge Teen Health Council
Mothers Against Senseless Killing
New Moms, Inc.
Planned Parenthood of Illinois
Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation
Safer Foundation
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Strengthening Chicago’s Youth
United Congress of Community & Religious Organizations
Voices for Illinois Children

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