November 29, 2004

Professor Deborah A. Ramirez
Executive Director, Partnering for Prevention
Northeastern University School of Law
400 Huntington Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02115-5000

Dear Professor Ramirez:

I hope that this letter reaches you well and in good spirits. I am writing on behalf of the Congress of Arab American Organizations (CAAO) in Michigan, in support of the Partnering for Prevention and Community Safety Initiative, which seeks to build bridges between law enforcement and the Arab, Muslim and Sikh communities.

I am the current Coordinator of the Congress. The CAAO is an umbrella organization for over 40 Arab and Muslim organizations in Southeast Michigan. The Congress was formed after September 11 to focus on issues that affect the Arab and Muslim communities as a whole.

The CAAO believes that this project is important for a number of reasons. First, it protects the community from hate crimes, which have escalated significantly since September 11. It also works to protect the community and the US as a whole from future terrorist attacks, by enhancing domestic intelligence, and finally, it enables the community to develop a positive civic identity.

Your research, embodied in the Promising Practices Guide, has provided us with a starting point for structuring, institutionalizing and funding a national program to develop and strengthen the partnership concept. This is important to the community because our community organizations have taken significant strides here in Michigan to enhance the relationship between the Arab American community and local and federal law enforcement agencies, and we feel that our experience can serve as a valuable tool. As you know, our efforts have resulted in the formation of BRIDGES (Building Respect in Diverse Groups to Enhance Security); a group comprised of community leaders and the heads of all the federal agencies in the Detroit area that meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues of mutual concern. This group is co-chaired by the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan and ADC Regional Director Imad Hamadi. It has emerged as an essential tool for understanding and has served as a model that can be duplicated in other parts of the country.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this endeavor and we will help you as you try to do further research and develop a national training center to support state, local and federal partnership initiatives.

Sincerely,

Osama Siblani, Coordinator
Congress of Arab American Organizations (CAAO) of Michigan