

October 2, 2019

International Association of Chiefs of  
Police  
44 Canal Center Plaza #200,  
Alexandria, VA 22314

National Sheriff's  
Association  
1450 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Fraternal Order of  
Police  
701 Marriott Drive  
Nashville TN 37214

**Re: Model Policy to Accommodate Sikh Law Enforcement Officers**

Dear Law Enforcement Community Leaders,

Each signatory to this letter is a Sikh currently serving or who previously served in law enforcement in various jurisdictions around our great nation or in the United States Armed Forces. Starting in 2009 and continuing to the present, many of us received extraordinary religious accommodations that allowed us to serve with our Sikh articles of faith - namely, our uncut hair, beard and turbans. Joined by the outside counsel at The Sikh Coalition that helped support many of these accommodation efforts, we request your support in ensuring that observant Sikhs and other religious minorities can readily serve in all law enforcement agencies across the country as well as all branches of the Armed Forces, to protect our nation while maintaining their religious articles of faith.

The Sikh religion was founded over five centuries ago in South Asia and is the fifth largest world religion, with approximately 25 million adherents worldwide and 500,000 followers in the United States. Observant Sikhs are required to wear a religious uniform consisting of a Dastar (turban) and five articles of faith: Kesh (uncut hair, including a facial hair); Kanga (a small wooden comb); Kachera (cotton undershorts); Kara (steel bracelet); and Kirpan (article of faith resembling a knife or sword). These articles of faith have deep spiritual and moral significance and should not be regarded as secular accessories or symbols that can be removed or replaced at will.

Notably, observant Sikhs throughout the world are able to comply with their religious obligations while serving in modern militaries, including the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force; British Armed Forces; Canadian Armed Forces; and Indian Armed Forces. Additionally, observant Sikhs are allowed to maintain their articles of faith while serving in the police departments of major cities worldwide, including London, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Chicago, Washington, DC and Houston. These soldiers and officers are able to perform their duties while maintaining the highest standards of neat and conservative uniformity, preserving individual readiness, meeting all safety requirements, and contributing to esprit de corps and unit cohesion of their organizations.

By accommodating Sikh law enforcement officers to practice their religion while serving, police agencies across the country gain access to the important talents and abilities of individuals who are willing to serve and sacrifice their lives for our nation. The inclusion of observant Sikh-American law enforcement officers helps build trust with the jurisdiction they're meant to protect, enriches their community's understanding of diverse cultures, languages, and religions, thereby allowing us to fully appreciate the rich fabric of America. Despite all the benefits for accommodating observant Sikh officers, however, only about 25 out of 15,400 law enforcement agencies in the United States have permitted accommodations for Sikhs to wear their religious articles of faith.

As you know, Deputy Sheriff Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal of the Harris County Sheriff's Department was shot and killed on September 27, 2019, outside of Houston, TX, while in the line of duty. Given the long history of public service for Sikhs around the world, it is not surprising that Deputy Dhaliwal walked

away from a lucrative trucking business to join the Sheriff's office to help build bridges between religious minority communities like Sikhs and law enforcement. In doing so, he was a trailblazer for his commitment to serve as a role model for Sikhs and other minorities in law enforcement and a hero for providing humanitarian relief to communities in need, before making the ultimate sacrifice with his life.

News of Deputy Dhaliwal's accommodation in 2015 made national headlines as one of the nation's largest Sheriff's departments changed its policy to allow him to keep his unshorn hair and facial hair, and wear an unconcealed Sikh turban in accordance with his Sikh faith while on patrol. Unfortunately, Deputy Dhaliwal is the exception to diversity initiatives within law enforcement. Sikhs who want to protect and serve our communities are often spurned from public service due to unwelcoming uniform policies and having to navigate complex bureaucracy. Without legal assistance or legislation, Sikhs continue to experience discrimination in the workplace by not having their religious articles of faith accommodated.

We believe that no Sikh should have to face the impossible decision of choosing between their faith and public service. Deputy Dhaliwal's service has shown that Sikhs have proven their mettle and desire to serve on the front lines of law enforcement while maintaining their religious articles of faith - and have done so with distinction and the respect of their communities. We hope that with the legacy of Deputy Dhaliwal in mind, we honor his sacrifice to our nation by ensuring that more Sikhs are permitted to serve in law enforcement with their religious articles of faith intact. One way we can accomplish this goal is to incorporate more welcoming policies towards Sikhs and other religious minorities. Along those lines, we have enclosed for your review model policy guidelines for law enforcement agencies to accommodate observant Sikhs.

Readily incorporating religious diversity into law enforcement will help dispel majoritarian stereotypes about what Americans should look like, and counteract discrimination these marginalized communities face. Given the precedent for Sikh accommodations in uniformed services in major police departments across the country, agencies everywhere can modernize their religious accommodation policies to allow religiously mandated unshorn hair, including facial hair, and unconcealed religious headwear.

We request your leadership in developing a model policy for law enforcement agencies across the nation to use in accommodating more religious minorities, and to carry on Deputy Dhaliwal's legacy of service.

Sincerely,

Pawanjit Rai, SPC, US Army  
Harpal Singh, SPC, US Army  
Simran Lamba, CPL, US Army  
Arjan Ghotra, Cadet, US Army  
Attpreetinder Singh Walia, SPC, US Army  
Kanwar Singh, 2D LIEUT, US Army National Guard  
Lilian Gill, Cadet, US Army  
Abinashi Khalsa, SPC & Deputy Sheriff, US Army and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, CA  
Baljinder Chouhan, CPT, US Army Reserve  
Gurmehar Singh, SPC, US Army  
Shagundeeep Singh Virk, PV2, US Army Reserve  
Gurjiwan Chahal, Cadet, US Army  
Jujhar Singh, Police Officer, Hayward Police Department, CA  
Ranjit Sandhu, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Amarjit Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Jatinder Gill, Motor Carrier Specialist, California Highway Patrol

Gurvinder Bachhal, New York City Police Department, NY  
Arundeep Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Maninder Matharu, 2D LIEUT, EMT (Fmr.)  
Anmol Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Gurpreet Singh, Police Cadet, New York City Police Department, NY  
Mandeep Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Jaskirat Singh, Police Officer, Milpitas Police Department, CA  
Indervir Singh, New York City Police Department, NY  
Amanjeet Sandhu, CPT, New York City Police Department, NY  
Pratima Bhullar Maldonado, New York City Police Department, NY  
Inderjit Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Gurpreet Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Taranjit Singh, Police Officer, Connecticut  
Talwinder Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Gulrej Nandha, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Raja Rathour, CPT, New York City Department of Corrections, NY  
Karan Pannu, SPC, US Army Reserve  
Gurprit Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Parmjit Kaur  
Tejinder Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Jaswinder Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
S. Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Harjot Singh, SPC, US Army  
Jeetendra Sodhi, Correction Officer, Federal Bureau of Prisons  
Sahib Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Rajwant Dhaliwal, Police Officer, Atlanta Police Department, GA  
Avneet Singh, SPC, US Army Reserves  
Abdullah Rashid, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Tejveer Dhamija, 2D LIEUT, US Military  
Sukhvinder Singh Hundal, Correctional Officer, Yolo County Sheriff's Office, CA  
Ranvir Sanghera, Police Officer, Alameda County Sheriff's Office, CA  
Simratpal Singh, CPT, US Army  
Manjeet Kaur, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Simarjit Rai, Deputy Sheriff, Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, CA  
Jasvir Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Shabaddeep Singh, SPC, US Army  
Kuljit Kaur  
Gurmeet Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Jagjeet Singh, Auxiliary Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Sukhdeep Gill, Deputy Sheriff, Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, CA  
Lakhwinder Singh, Border Protection Officer, US Customs and Border Protection  
Noor Kaur Dhadha, 2D LIEUT, US Army  
Dr. Prabhjot Singh Bijral, Reservist, US Army National Guard  
Sukhjeet S Sangha, Detective, Hayward Police Department, CA  
Gurpreet Cheema, SPC, US Army  
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Rohit Singh, Auxiliary SGT, New York City Police Department, NY  
Simranjit Khurana, Deputy Sheriff, Eddy County Sheriff's Office, NM  
Harinder Kaur Khalsa, Deputy Sheriff (Fmr.), Alameda County Sheriff's Office, CA  
Dharminder Sonni, SPC, US Army Reserve  
Karan Sarpal, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY

Sanjeet Brar, SPC, US Army Reserves  
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Rupinder Sanghera, Correctional Officer, Bureau of Prisons  
Hardeep Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Manpreet Singh, Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Balreet Khaira,SSG, US Army National Guard  
Jasleen Dhaliwal, 1LT, US Army Reserves  
Manminder Johal, CPT, US Air Force  
Dildeep Singh, Auxiliary Police Officer, New York City Police Department, NY  
Narjit Singh, Correction Officer, US Army Reserve and New York City Department of Correction, NY  
Gurjot Brar, SGT, US Marine Corps  
Raja Kainth  
Simranjit Singh Dhaliwal, CPT, US Army  
Gurchetan Singh, A1C Recruit, US Air National Guard  
Gurkamal Kaur (fka Donna Moulton), RSVP (Fmr.), San Diego Police Department, CA  
Gurmeet S. Grewal, SFC (Ret.), US Army  
Ibrahim Ahmed  
James Fox, M SGT, California National Guard, AGR  
Kirnbir Singh Grewal, SSG, US Army  
Karamjit Singh, Correctional Counselor, Indiana Department of Correction, IN  
Bhavnish Singh, Amn, US Air Force  
Gopal S. Khalsa, COL, US Army  
Anandeep Kaur Dhaliwal, SA (Fmr.), US Navy  
Mani Singh, SGT  
Sumeet Singh, SGT, US Marine Corps  
Hamid Sandhu, SGT, US Army  
Gurpreet Gill, SGT, US Army  
Parveen Soni, US Army  
Sukhleen Dhillon, PRIV 1 CL, US Army  
Aseem Pandey, SFC (Ret.),  
Jasminder Dhaliwal, US Navy  
Navdeep Randhawa, SPC, US Army

cc:

Congressional Law Enforcement Caucus  
National Governors Association  
United States Conference of Mayors  
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