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Statement on New Jersey 101.5's Judi Franco's crass and callous remarks regarding fallen law enforcement officers and the Move Over Law

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New Jersey 101.5's Judi Franco a Habitual Offender at Habitually Offending the Law Enforcement Community

It appears the vaccination of a 10-day suspension has not cured the foot in mouth disease of New Jersey 101.5 talk show host Judi Franco. As you may recall, Franco was recently suspended for her abhorrent comments about New Jersey's top law-enforcement officer, Attorney General Gurbir Grewal. Now Franco has turned to trampling on the graves of fallen police officers while compromising public safety by downplaying the importance of the Move Over Law.

As New Jerseyans, we possess a great gift in the form of Donna Setaro, the mother of state trooper Marc Castellano, who was struck and killed on Interstate 195 in the line of duty on June 6, 2010, by a motorist who failed to move over for emergency vehicles that were in service on the shoulder of that roadway. I refer to Donna as a gift to New Jerseyans because she has turned the loss of her son Marc into motivation which has enabled her to become the nation's number one advocate for the Move Over Law. Donna's passion to promote Move Over Law Awareness has undoubtedly saved the lives of numerous first responders, tow truck operators, and sanitation workers across the state. There are two sad realities however, first, despite Donna's great efforts, first responders are still being struck by vehicles on our roadways, and second, and the driving force behind this piece, is that a law enforcement representative such as myself should never have to answer our phones to hear the mother of a fallen trooper in tears because a viral radio personality such as Judi Franco has chosen to mock and downplay the importance of the Move Over Law by calling it and I quote "Bad law" and "A silly law."

Beyond just being a meager attempt to stir the pot for ratings, while dealing yet another insult to the law enforcement community, Franco could not even take the time to get her facts correct, before pushing out her poorly written "opinion" piece about proposed changes to strengthen the Move Over Law by adding two motor vehicle points to a violation of the statute. The Move Over Law (N.J.S.A. 39:4-92.2) was enacted in January 27, 2009, over a year before the death of Trooper Castellano. The law passed with little to no fanfare, which myself, Donna, and many others in the law enforcement community believe the lack of awareness of the law directly contributed to Marc's death. Sadly, Franco attempts to project the Move Over Law as some "silly" knee jerk reaction to Marc's death, when the facts show it was a law our state legislature strongly believed was needed before we lost Marc.

The fact of the matter remains that despite all the efforts to raise awareness of the Move Over Law and keep first responders safe on our state's highways, since August, there have been seven police officers struck on the state's roadways due to driver's failing to move over. On August 9, 2018, four Manchester Township police officers were struck on State Highway 37 less than one hundred feet from a posted Move Over Law sign. One of the Manchester police officers still remains out due to injuries sustained from that incident. On the heels of that crash, the New Jersey State Police, the Ocean County Prosecutor's and Sheriff's Offices, and the Manchester Police Department conducted an enforcement and awareness detail on Labor Day Weekend. Sadly, just one weekend later, on September 9, the patrol car of a Brick Township officer was struck on Route 70 with the officer inside the car, struck by an impaired driver who failed to slow down and move over for the Brick officer who was investigating an unrelated motor vehicle crash. Within the last three weeks, and only five days apart, a New Jersey State trooper was struck on the south end of the New Jersey Turnpike and a Palisades Interstate Parkway Police officer was struck while investigating a crash on that roadway.

The frequency of these incidents underscores the need for deterrence of this violation by assessing two motor vehicle points to violators of the Move Over Law. I applaud the legislators who have undertaken the task of bringing forth this legislation and may I add that the legislation had vast support from both sides of the aisle including Monmouth County Senator Vin Gopal, Assembly members Eric Houghtaling and Joann Downey, who is a former deputy attorney general, and Ocean County Senator Jim Holzapfel and Assemblyman Gregory McGuckin, who are both former prosecutors. Senator Gopal, a prime sponsor of the senate version of the Bill stated, "The lack of common sense and common decency displayed by New Jersey 101.5 host Judi Franco has surpassed even my lowest of expectations. To use the loss of a brave State Police Officer as click bait in order to prove her misguided opinions trivializes

the tragic death of Marc Castellano. "A dead cop is sad," is how she trivializes this law - this is disgraceful and disgusting. 101.5 owes all of law enforcement an apology. If this bi-partisan bill saves the life of one law enforcement professional, it is well worth it." Assembly members Houghtaling and Downey also weighed in stating, "Shame on Judi Franco of 101.5. This bill is not about points, it is about bringing awareness to the safety of our law enforcement officers. This legislation shows how serious we take the safety of our state's brave police officers and will create more awareness for the current move over law."

The sad reality in Franco's hatred of law enforcement is her ignorance to the importance of this public safety principle. Police officers and other first responders, more often than not are dispatched to roadside encounters such as motor vehicle accidents and motorist aids. What has clearly gone over Franco's head in this instance is that she could be one of those motorists assessing the damage to her vehicle on the side of the road with an investigating officer or trooper. Likewise, she could be that motorist changing a flat tire on her vehicle with the flashing lights of a patrol car keeping her safe until being struck by a driver who did not get the message via awareness or deterrence failed to Move Over!

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