



**Office of the New York State
Attorney General**

**Letitia James
Attorney General**

December 4, 2025

Commissioner Jessica Tisch
New York City Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Via Email

Re: Letter regarding Executive Law 75(5)(b) Referral of Sergeant Joel Ayala, OAG
Matter No. 1-794587767

Dear Commissioner Tisch,

We have reviewed your agency's referral of Sergeant Joel Ayala pursuant to Executive Law Section 75(5)(b). Based on our review, we have concluded that Sergeant Ayala engaged in a pattern of misconduct related to his participation in unlawful stops, frisks, and searches in contravention of the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution, Article I, Section 12 of the New York State Constitution, and NYPD policies and procedures.

Our findings are based on a review of following incidents:

- CCRB 202000911: On January 30, 2020, then-Detective Ayala was working as part of the SRG City-wide Anti-crime Squad in the Bronx. Along with two other officers, Detective Ayala approached Complainant 1 in a fleet vehicle. Complainant 1 was standing on a streetcorner with one other individual at the time. Complainant 1 began to walk away from the officers as they approached him. The officers allegedly then got out of the vehicle and chased Complainant 1 by foot and took him down to the ground. One officer (name and rank unknown) allegedly put a knee on the individual's back during the stop. The complainant was then handcuffed and frisked. He was ultimately not arrested and released without a summons, and the officers did not provide him with a business card as required by the Right to Know Act (RTKA). The Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) investigated this incident and substantiated allegations that the stop and the frisk of Complainant 1 were unlawful because that the officers did not have reasonable suspicion to pursue, stop, or frisk the complainant. The CCRB recommended Command Discipline A for Detective Ayala,

however, because the statute of limitations had expired, he did not receive a penalty from NYPD for this allegation.¹

- CCRB 202307427: On July 1, 2023, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 46th Precinct in the Bronx. Along with two other officers, Sergeant Ayala stopped, frisked, and searched Complainant 2, who was walking down the street at approximately 1:20 am, and did not provide him with an RKTA card or their names. Sergeant Ayala was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. The CCRB investigated this incident and concluded that the stop and frisk of the complainant were unlawful because the officers did not have reasonable suspicion. The CCRB also concluded that Sergeant Ayala's refusal to share his name, failure to provide Complainant 2 with an RKTA card, and failure to prepare a memo book entry violated NYPD policy. The NYPD imposed discipline on Sergeant Ayala for the stop, refusal to provide name, and failure to provide an RTKA card (Command Discipline B – three vacation days).
- CCRB 202308235: On August 30, 2023, Segreant Ayala was working out of the 52nd Precinct in the Bronx. Sergeant Ayala, along with three additional officers, stopped Complainant 3 and two other individuals and frisked their fanny packs as they were walking down a street at approximately 2 am. Sergeant Ayala was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. The CCRB substantiated allegations that the stops and frisks were unlawful because the officers lacked reasonable suspicion, and that the officers failed to provide an RKTA card, failed to properly use their body-worn cameras, and failed to prepare both a memo book entry and a stop and frisk report. Sergeant Ayala was disciplined with a loss of seven vacation days (Command Discipline B) for the improper stop and frisk, failure to provide an RKTA card, and improper use of a body-worn camera.
- CCRB 202309622: On October 11, 2023, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 52nd Precinct's Public Safety Team in the Bronx. While driving in an unmarked vehicle along with three other officers, Sergeant. Ayala pulled up next to Complainant 4, who was walking with his nephew at approximately 9 pm, and conducted a stop. Both individuals were frisked during the stop. Sergeant Ayala provided a false badge number to the individuals during the interaction. All officers failed to use their body-worn cameras properly and failed to complete memo book entries based on the incident. According to stop reports prepared by the officers, the stops were based on the purported resemblance between Complainant 4 and his nephew and two individuals who were wanted for in connection with the robbery of a motorbike that had happened 11 days earlier and 1.5 miles away from where the stop of Complainant 4 and his nephew occurred. Sergeant Ayala was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. The CCRB investigated this incident and substantiated allegations that the stops and frisks of Complainant 4 and his nephew were unlawful because they were not supported by reasonable suspicion given that their descriptions did not match those of the

¹ According to the CCRB Closing Report, then-Detective Ayala and the two other involved officers each failed to appear for three scheduled interviews and NYPD was not able to locate the relevant BWC footage until the CCRB's fourth request for that footage, at which point the retention period had expired. These circumstances appear to have significantly delayed the CCRB investigation.

wanted individuals, the eleven days that had passed since the robbery, and the distance between the location of the stop and the location of the robbery. The CCRB also concluded that Sergeant Ayala failed to properly use his body-worn camera as required by NYPD policy. The CCRB also substantiated the allegation that Sergeant Ayala took law enforcement action based on the actual or perceived race of Complainant 4 and his nephew. The CCRB recommended charges and specifications for the substantiated allegations, which remain pending.

- CCRB 202310223: On October 29, 2023, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 52nd Precinct as a part of the Public Safety Team in the Bronx. A driver of a hired taxi service was pulled over by Sergeant Ayala at approximately 2:30 am and Complainant 5, who was the customer of the vehicle and sitting in the backseat, was stopped and searched while additional officers searched the vehicle. The basis for the stop was a seatbelt violation by Complainant 5. Sergeant Ayala was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. Sergeant Ayala failed to prepare a memo book entry, failed to produce a stop and frisk report, failed to provide the individuals involved with an RKTA card, and failed to explain the reason for the stop. The CCRB investigated this incident and substantiated allegations that Sergeant Ayala lacked the required reasonable suspicion to frisk Complainant 5, and that Sergeant Ayala failed to provide an RKTA card as required by law and took law enforcement action based on the actual or perceived race of Complainant 5. Sergeant Ayala was served Charges and Specifications for abuse of authority based on allegations of biased policing, failure to explain a reason for the stop, failure to provide a RTKA card, and an improper frisk, which remain pending.
- CCRB 202400163: On January 4, 2024, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 46th Precinct in The Bronx. He was among the highest-ranking officers involved in this incident. He and another officer conducted a pedestrian stop and frisk of a civilian at approximately 10:45 pm. Sergeant Ayala was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. The CCRB investigated and substantiated allegations that the stop was not supported by reasonable suspicion (Sergeant Ayala was held responsible only for the stop, because the frisk was conducted by the other officer). The CCRB recommended discipline for the stop and failure to provide an RKTA card, and discipline was imposed (Command Discipline B – six vacation days).

Sergeant Ayala also is the subject of several open CCRB investigations:

- CCRB 202411388: On November 14, 2024, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 46th Precinct in the Bronx. Along with three other officers, Sergeant Ayala allegedly stopped, searched, failed to provide an RKTA card, forcibly touched, and conducted racially biased policing towards an individual. He was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. The CCRB is currently investigating this complaint.
- CCRB 202501391: On December 1, 2024, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 46th Precinct in the Bronx. Along with several other officers, Sergeant Ayala allegedly stopped, questioned, searched, frisked, threatened and used physical force towards an individual. He

was the highest-ranking officer involved in this incident. The CCRB is currently investigating this complaint.

- CCRB 202504437: On December 28, 2024, Sergeant Ayala was working out of the 46th Precinct in the Bronx. Along with several other officers, Sergeant Ayala allegedly threatened and used physical force towards an individual. The CCRB is currently investigating this complaint. He was among the highest-ranking officers involved in this incident.

Based on the substantiated incidents described above, we conclude that Sergeant Ayala engaged in a pattern of unlawful stops, frisks, and searches in contravention of the Fourth Amendment.

Sergeant Ayala's role as supervisor and his repeated similar acts of misconduct should be considered as aggravating factors in any discipline imposed in connection with his pending disciplinary cases, consistent with the NYPD disciplinary matrix. In addition, to prevent future misconduct, we recommend that NYPD develop and implement a remedial plan for ensuring Sergeant Ayala's compliance with constitutional policing standards, including retraining, monitoring, and periodic auditing of his stops and seizures. Finally, given his pattern of wrongful stops and searches, which persisted despite repeated discipline, Sergeant Ayala should no longer be assigned to specialized anti-crime, public safety, or neighborhood safety teams, and NYPD should consider transferring him to a non-patrol assignment that does not involve public contact.

We request a written response within 90 days as to NYPD's remedial actions pursuant to Executive Law § 75(5)(c), specifically including the remedial plan described above and records of retraining.

Thank you,

LETITIA JAMES
Attorney General of the State of New York

By: Tyler Nims
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