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LDF Issues Statement on Maryland's New Police Accountability Laws

This week, the Maryland General Assembly passed a number of bills aimed at addressing long-standing accountability and transparency issues in law enforcement. These bills amend the Maryland Public Information Act to allow the disclosure of police disciplinary records; repeal the Law Enforcement Bill of Rights; establish an advisory board that will issue recommendations on the transfer of control of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) from the state to the city of Baltimore; and amend the use of force standard for officers.

Governor Larry Hogan vetoed three of the bills, but those vetoes were overridden by the Maryland Assembly and state Senate, officially making them law. The governor let the local control bill become law without his signature.

In response to the passage of these bills, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill issued the following statement:

“The passage of these comprehensive bills will have a significant impact on the lives of Maryland residents, who have long called for accountability and tangible changes to harmful policing practices across the state. With the killings of Freddie Gray, Korryn Gaines, Anton Black, and others, Marylanders have had to grapple with the legacy of police violence and misconduct for far too long.

“Baltimoreans, too, have suffered and been subject to violent policing practices and discrimination that have long engendered mistrust between the community and the BPD. Baltimore advocates and community members have passionately pushed for police accountability measures and highlighted the collective urgency for public safety strategies that build community trust for many years.

“These new laws are a victory steeped in the coordinated efforts of community members and advocates who have worked for police accountability, transparency, and justice. This landmark package of bills required hard-fought advocacy and its removal of a number of impediments to police accountability has come after over a decade of rallying for a just public safety system.

“We are gratified that the hard work so many advocates invested in this process has produced real change. We have always believed that Maryland should be leading in breaking down barriers to accountability for police misconduct. Although we didn't get all of the changes we hoped for this session, we salute the legislature for its clear and overwhelming support in enacting these transformative measures. LDF will monitor the implementation of these new laws to ensure that Maryland residents benefit from the changes laid out in the legislation.”

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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