NBCSL Statement on The Events Surrounding George Floyd’s Death and Its Aftermath

This is not a statement expressing our concern with and condemnation of law enforcement actions that led to the death of another unarmed black male. We are way past that point, and this is not the time.

There is no need to rehash the facts because they are well known in almost every case. It generally goes like this: black male is in a public place and viewed with suspicion by a white American. The police are summoned and engage the suspicious black male, and another family is ripped apart by ‘state enabled terrorism.’

The anger and frustration of protesters around the country confirm that the latest killing is just an example of a larger problem. Racism! It is present in our country’s DNA since our founding and inexplicably interwoven in our institutions like law enforcement.

We write today not to add our voice to merely condemning this act, but rather to serve notice that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) will not tire nor rest until state laws protect the lives of people of color with the same vigor as it does our white counterparts. We will tirelessly examine state laws that make it easier for people of color to be killed by rogue citizens acting under the guise of law enforcement. We will provide our members with the support needed to help make every community safe from these acts of terror. While we cannot legislate morality and cure the scourge of racism, we can offer polices to increase training and accountability for law enforcement. We can offer policies to establish and strengthen where necessary hate crime laws. We can also hold state and local executives accountable for their law enforcement policies and procedures.

And for those who believe these acts of terror to be strictly a law enforcement problem, we beseech you to look again. As we re-open and rebuild this country in the post COVID-19 days, let us commit to focus not only on our justice system, but also on our public education system as well, to prevent failing schools from becoming feeders for the penal system. Let us make sure our economy is open to everyone from every community, so protesters will be hesitant to destroy local businesses they own.

Finally, communities of color are already being ravaged by COVID-19 and with these added incidents of racism we are forced to deal with loss and injustice on two fronts. Members and constituents should continue to make every possible effort to maintain mental and stability so we can adequately face both of these issues head on.

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL), the nation’s premier organization representing and serving the interests of African American State legislators with more than 700 members representing over 60 million Americans. NBCSL serves as a national network, advocate, and catalyst for public policy innovation, information exchange, and joint action on critical issues affecting African Americans and other marginalized communities.