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## **Prince George's County District Public Defender Calls for Reforms and Reduced Policing**

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At a press conference today, District Public Defender Keith Lotridge renewed calls for accountability, transparency, and reduced policing as urgent measures needed to make Prince George's County a safer and more just region for all of its residents. The press conference was called by the County State's Attorney Aisha N. Braveboy in response to the resignation of Prince George's County Police Chief Hank Stawinski after the release of a report detailing systemic race discrimination by the Police Department against Black and Brown police officers.

"Similar to calls around the country, systemic change regarding police culture and policing is urgently needed in Prince George's County, not just for the officers experiencing employment discrimination but for all Prince George's residents," said Lotridge. "The systemic racism against officers alleged in the report comes from the same culture that has caused ongoing abuse and mistreatment of our clients – Black and Brown men and women who are targeted by police and then discredited when their account contradicts those claimed by misbehaving officers."

At the press conference, County's State Attorney Aisha N. Braveboy agreed to adopt measures to improve police accountability and transparency. Lotridge highlighted importance of such changes: "Currently, we do not receive records of investigation into police misconduct... There has been a concerted effort to keep the citizens of this county and Defendants facing jail from accessing this information. In many cases that information could in fact have led to exoneration."

"With unprecedented national attention finally being paid to police violence, and increased recognition that these abuses occur not just in other states but in our own backyard, this is an historic opportunity for meaningful change to make our county safer and more just for all residents," said Lotridge.

"Accountability is a fundamental necessity for law enforcement, and true accountability requires transparency. We hope that the State's Attorney's efforts help ensure that all residents are better able to understand what is being done, when it is being done and by whom."

In addition to reforms within policing, Lotridge urged for greater emphasis on diversion from law enforcement and reallocation of resources to other community response services.

"Our culture has increasingly relied on policing to criminalize every nuisance and arrests have become a powerful way to maintain inequalities and discrimination. Now is the moment to examine these roles and to shift resources from law enforcement to community services that are better equipped to respond to crises and equitably treat all of our neighbors."

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