

LONG ISLAND ADVOCATES FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

June 14, 2021

Hon. Laura Curran
Nassau County Executive
1550 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, New York 11501

Dear County Executive Curran,

It is with great concern that we find it necessary to provide this letter to you. After seeing the passage of time where no action has been taken by you, we now write to formally request that you encourage the retirement and resignation, or bring about the termination of Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder. His series of comments made during a Newsday investigation of racial disparities in hiring by the Nassau and Suffolk County Police Departments, and then his abysmal attempt to rationalize his statements makes clear that he can no longer effectively serve in his current position.

As you know, Newsday published the results of its investigation finding that it is three times more likely for Black applicants to be disqualified during the vetting process which leads to being hired by the Nassau and Suffolk County police departments as compared to White applicants. Indeed, from 2012 to 2018, of the 6,539 Black applicants to both departments, only 67 were hired. Nassau and Suffolk's hiring processes rejected minority applicants at rates that exceeded a federally established benchmark used to detect evidence of unlawful discrimination and have contributed to a police force that does not reflect the diversity of Long Island. During the past eight months, LIAFPA, LI United and UJPLI along with our member organizations implored you to address this problem and multiple others connected to policing and racial disparities in Nassau. Your refusal and the refusal of Mr. Ryder to even discuss these serious issues was beyond disappointing. In fact, it was and is a disastrous travesty.

Please take the time to study what was said and just how damning these words and thoughts are to moving the Nassau society forward. Asked about racial disparities in police recruitment, Commissioner Ryder stated "When we look at diversity in a police department, you've got to look at other employments around the country. What's the percentage of Asians that are in the doctor world? What is the percentage of lawyers that are Jewish?" He also stated "I think the process we have is good. I think giving kids a little advantage in minority communities is good, too. They just don't have it. They don't have mom and dad." These egregious comments demonstrate a need for great concern from any person, no less a leader, who would consider themselves attuned to the deep wounds which come with the sin of racism. These comments are painful, grounded in dangerous racial stereotypes, and reflect a misunderstanding of the barriers to recruitment of quality candidates in Black and Brown communities.

The Police Commissioner's words set the tone for the entire Police Department and for you as well. Although we harbor no personal animus towards Commissioner Ryder, he is the wrong person to be charged with diversifying the police force. Put simply, Commissioner Ryder cannot fix what he does not, and is unwilling to, understand. We have repeatedly tried to educate the Police Commissioner on racial discrimination in police hiring and retention through both meetings and by authoring the People's Plan, to no

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Black Long Island



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apparent avail.

While coming after yet another emergency that could have been avoided, we thank you for accepting the People's Plan recommendation to form a committee to study police recruitment, testing and training practice. Undoubtedly, this should have been included in the Nassau County Police Reform Plan required by Executive Order 203. However, there are a number of immediate actions you can take without further study and which would increase minority recruitment into the Police Department. For that, we refer you to the People's Plan. As we have continued to be, we remain open and available to interface and dialogue with you and your staff about how you can make positive moves to address police accountability, racial disparities in use of force, racial disparities in arrests, racial disparities in car stops and racial disparities in hiring. Once again, we hope that you will find it within yourself to do what is good and what is right.

Yours in the pursuit of Justice,

Tracey Edwards Frederick K. Brewington

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On Behalf of LIAFPA

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