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COUNCILWOMAN 7th DISTRICT

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Statement from Councilmember Maria D. Quiñones Sánchez

“We must enact a permanent, independent, citizen-led police advisory commission with real powers to investigate, to discipline, to enforce, and to change policies that include public reporting and accountability when it comes to officer misconduct, limits on use of force, limits on racial profiling, limits on stops, searches, and arrests, and protections against hate crimes and sexual assaults. We must pass a budget that represents our morals and that treats Black and Brown communities as an investment rather than an expense. Black lives matter, and our children deserve justice.

“On March 23, 2015, Mayor Michael Nutter signed an executive order creating a citizen oversight board to carry out recommendations of President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which was co-chaired by Police Commissioner Ramsey, and led by the Department of Justice, which later discovered that our Philadelphia police department only sustained 138 of 8,555 complaints of misconduct over a four year period between 2013 and 2016.

“The creation of this citizen oversight board followed 2012 and 2014 proposals by Councilmembers Curtis Jones Jr., Cindy Bass, Kenyatta Johnson, and me to establish a permanent, chartered, independent, citizen-run Police Advisory Commission with real powers to investigate, discipline, enforce, and change department policies on officer misconduct, limits on use of force, limits on racial profiling, limits on stops, searches, and arrests, and protections against hate crimes and sexual assaults.

“While continuing to insist on a permanent structure, I served on Mayor Nutter’s new citizen oversight board under the leadership of Temple Law Dean Joann Epps and with the citizens of Philadelphia. Together, we reset police policies and procedures including 7 of the **8** that **Can’t Wait**, that is, the 8 actions trending on Twitter today that reduce police violence by 75%. We banned chokeholds and strangleholds. We established a duty to intervene. We required a use of force continuum. We required de-escalation. We required warning before using deadly force. We required exhausting all means before using deadly force.

“But we did not achieve – and we have still not achieved the 8th action that brings it all together – that reduces 25% of killings alone because it gives all the other actions teeth – and that is the requirement of accessible public reporting, through a complaint system that is anonymous, online, and available in multiple formats and languages at nonpolice locations; through a system which holds officers accountable to all of the standards we fought for – standards of officer misconduct and discipline, limits on the use of force, limits on racial profiling, limits on stops, searches, and arrests, protections against hate crimes and sexual assault; through a system that identifies officers by name, and that pinpoints the date, time, location, evidence, and both actual and perceived identity of those who are stopped, searched, arrested, profiled, or victimized; and through a system that identifies patterns that trigger early intervention, discipline, and termination of officers. We simply cannot achieve meaningful policy reform without real accountability and transparency.

“On Monday, President Barack Obama reaffirmed his call for cities and states to take action for George Floyd and for the future of our Black and Brown children and grandchildren. He said: ‘Aspirations have to be translated into specific laws and institutional practices.’ He reaffirmed protest as the lifeblood of our democracy. Words matter. Gestures matter. The long overdue removal of a statue that symbolized violence and injustice matters. So do the actions and accountability of the City of Philadelphia. Let’s get to work.”

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