For Immediate Release
Thursday, March 15, 2018

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LDF Provides Feedback on Baltimore Police Department's Draft Use-of-Force Policies

As part of the consent decree between the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) and the U.S. Justice Department (DOJ), the BPD must revise its use-of-force policies to address the DOJ’s findings of a pattern or practice of excessive force and overly aggressive policing tactics. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) sent a letter today to Kenneth Thompson, the independent monitor overseeing implementation of the consent decree, providing initial feedback on the BPD’s draft use-of-force policies. While LDF is encouraged that the draft policies incorporate promising practices from across the country, the letter urges the BPD to go beyond what is constitutionally required by including and maintaining common sense policies that are necessary for the safety of the police and community alike.

LDF’s feedback on the draft policies focus on four key recommendations for the BPD: create a separate and distinct de-escalation policy; explicitly prohibit unnecessarily aggressive or illegal uses of force; clearly define and encourage the use of less-lethal force; and meticulously document, review and publicly report use-of-force data to uncover and address disparities based on race, gender, or any other factor. Ultimately, if the policies are to be effective, the letter emphasizes that they must be enforced through well-defined guidance, training, and systems of accountability.

The initial comment period ends today, and members of the public may submit their views here.

Read LDF’s letter here.

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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 and 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.