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LDF Issues Statement on Police Killing of Children, Calls for the Department of Justice to Take Action

Yesterday, body-worn camera footage was released depicting the fatal March 29 police shooting of 13-year-old Adam Toledo in Chicago. In response, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill issued the following statement:

“The killing of 13-year-old Adam Toledo is abhorrent and represents one of the bleakest referenda on the state of policing in our country. The young boy complied with the directives of the police officer, but was killed, nonetheless, with his hands in the air. Police violence is entrenched in the marrow of the Chicago Police Department. The Department’s sordid legacy of killing children, torturing Black and Brown people, and terrorizing communities of color is well documented. The brutality of this incident is compounded by the reality that Adam’s death is not an outlier. It is both a chilling reminder of police violence in our Black and Brown communities and a larger reflection of how law enforcement deploys deadly force on children nationwide, with a number of disturbing incidents in recent weeks. And it must stop immediately – not just in this city, but across the country.

“Urgent action is required. As a first step, we call on Attorney General Merrick Garland to freeze all Department of Justice (DOJ) funding to police departments until DOJ develops a protocol to ensure that federal funds provided to departments do not violate the anti-discrimination provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The United States Senate must also step up and immediately pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to provide the tools needed to end unlawful police violence in our nation. Additionally, just as Maryland did recently, Illinois must repeal its Law Enforcement Bill of Rights in order to hold its officers accountable for their brutality.

“LDF stands with the family of Adam Toledo – and the many other families and communities that are in pain today. We echo their calls for justice. The alarming number of children around the country killed in recent weeks by police underscores that something is fundamentally broken. We need bold and transformative change. It is clear that, as children continue to die violently at the hands of police, this change must occur swiftly and with absolute urgency – in every jurisdiction. We must confront, dismantle, and replace the use of deadly force by police with a reimagined model of public safety that does not continue the corrosive history of brutalizing and traumatizing our communities.”

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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. LDF 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.

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