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LDF Issues Statement on Gov. DeSantis Signing Anti-Protest Law in Florida

Today, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed H.B. 1, an anti-protestor bill that creates a new criminal penalty called “mob intimidation,” intensifies criminal and civil penalties for those who engage in protests, and allows specific elected officials to appeal when a municipality reduces the operating budget of its police department.

In response, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) Director of Policy Lisa Cylar Barrett issued the following statement:

“H.B. 1 is a direct attack on the ability of protesters to exercise their First Amendment rights and stifles attempts to redirect funds to critical community services needed to address the many issues for which a law enforcement response is unnecessary. It is not a coincidence that Governor DeSantis called for this legislation last September, during nationwide protests sparked by the horrific police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others. This timing suggests that the call for and passage of this bill represents an attempt to silence those seeking racial justice and police accountability.

“Instead of heeding advocates’ critical calls for change by committing to a vision of public safety that prioritizes communities and makes law enforcement accountable for its actions, the governor and the Florida legislature have further exacerbated tensions related to the immense problem of police violence by shamefully criminalizing the exercise of First Amendment rights. Such egregious efforts to silence those who are seeking urgently-needed reforms cannot be allowed to stand. LDF will work relentlessly to ensure that everyone is afforded the right to have their voice heard without fear of intimidation, violence, or unwarranted police action.”

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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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