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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We Oppose NJ Assembly Bill 1114

Call upon Assemblywoman Jasey to Withdraw Her Support

Bill is Shortsighted Absent Real Reforms to Hold Police Accountable

(Maplewood, NJ) - The SOMA Black Parents Workshop, Inc. is **opposed to Assembly Bill 1114** and views it as an insufficient response to the crisis of bad policing that impacts all citizens, but particularly African-Americans and Latinos. Despite the bill's well-intentioned effort to teach children their legal rights when interacting with a police officer, the legislation does nothing to hold police accountable for respecting and protecting the rights of children. The burden should be on adults who are trained professionals in law enforcement to respect the constitutional rights of children.

The incident of July 5, 2016 in Maplewood, when Black youth were subjected to police harassment and violence, instigated by the chief of police, is instructive. Many of these young people tried to assert their rights, and police responded in a way that demonstrated their indifference to the rights of the youth. The videotapes of that evening show police officers who had no regard for the rights of the youth, whether these young people asserted them or not.

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Across the country we have had countless incidents of law-abiding African-American adults, well versed in their rights, become victims of police violence. If adults cannot assert their rights and expect to be treated with respect, why do the bill's sponsors expect a different outcome for children? In fact, by encouraging children to "assert" their rights, even in the most non-threatening manner, could provoke an aggressive or violent reaction from officers whose biases prevent empathy or respect for Black life.

We encourage the bill's sponsors to withdraw A-1114, go back to the drawing board, and propose a set of reforms that addresses issues of systemic racism and cultural bias within local law enforcement departments. The Black Parents Workshop supports mandatory drug testing for law enforcement applicants, random drug testing for current officers, mandatory anti-racist training, psychological testing mandatory community outreach and a host of other reforms that will truly transform law enforcement and serve the public.

We particularly call upon Assemblywoman Mila Jasey to withdraw her support given she is our representative in Trenton. It's time we raised our expectations of adults and stopped placing the burden on children to be the facilitators of civil discourse.

For further information contact SOMA Black Parents Workshop Chairman **Walter Fields**, (973) 738-7876.

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