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United Black Agenda Responds to Gov. Murphy’s Nomination of Matt Platkin for NJ Attorney General

NEWARK – The United Black Agenda coalition today issued the following statement in response to Gov. Murphy’s nomination of Matt Platkin for Attorney General:

“Given the many issues that fall under the Attorney General’s purview with substantial racial justice implications, we are pleased that Governor Murphy has made a nomination to fill that important role and transition the office’s leadership from an ‘acting’ status. We acknowledge Acting Attorney General Bruck for the work we were able to do with him. If Mr. Platkin is confirmed, we look forward to continuing that progress.

“New Jersey stands at a crossroads. The question it must face is whether to embrace meaningful change that advances racial justice and opportunity for all or whether it will continue to pursue policies that harm New Jersey’s Black communities and other communities of color. We welcome the opportunity to work with a new Attorney General to take the courageous road and to make New Jersey a model for racial justice.

“New Jersey faces several critical challenges that, if confirmed, Mr. Platkin must immediately work to solve.

“First, Mr. Platkin must close New Jersey’s three failed, wasteful and antiquated youth prisons and reinvest those resources into the communities most impacted by youth incarceration. Our broken youth justice system boasts the widest racial disparity in the nation, with almost 18 Black youth locked up for every one of their white peers, even though they commit most offenses at similar rates. The cost to incarcerate a single youth is now $445,504 and this broken system has not prevented recidivism. Four years ago, New Jersey announced the closure of two of our state’s youth prisons; yet, all three remain open today. If Mr. Platkin is confirmed, we urge him to finally close all of our state’s youth prisons for once and for all.

“Second, Mr. Platkin must settle the lawsuit challenging segregation by race and class across the state’s public schools by admitting liability and committing to work with plaintiffs’ legal team, communities, young people and other stakeholders to create a robust public school system that
is equitably integrated by race, ethnicity and class across the state. New Jersey is the sixth most segregated state in the nation for Black students. If we are to make real the promises of opportunity, fairness and justice for all New Jersey residents, this must change. We urge Mr. Platkin to partner with advocates and stakeholders to bring our schools into the 21st century by letting all of our children learn together.

“Third, Mr. Platkin must commit to supporting meaningful police accountability measures – including a complete ban on law enforcement's use of chokeholds, the creation of municipal civilian complaint review boards and the end of law enforcement qualified immunity.

“Fourth, Mr. Platkin must support allowing people with criminal convictions to serve on juries, which is essential to strengthening our democracy.

“Fifth, Mr. Platkin must make a strong commitment to diversity in the bar by providing support for qualified candidates of color to fill seats in prosecutors’ offices across the state – including at the Chief and Assistant County Prosecutor levels.

“And last, Mr. Platkin must prioritize enforcement around housing discrimination and the Fair Chance in Housing Act.”

The United Black Agenda consists of the following groups and representatives:

- Ryan P. Haygood, CEO & President, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
- Elise Boddie, Founder, The Inclusion Project at Rutgers University
- Rev. Dr. Charles F. Boyer, Executive Director, Salvation and Social Justice
- Carolyn Chang, Past President and Current Social Justice Committee Chair, Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey
- Rev. Eric Dobson, Vice President, Fair Share Housing Center & Co-Convener, Black Multifaith Alliance
- Reva Foster, Chair, NJ Black Issues Convention
- Jerry Harris, Member, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice Board of Trustees
- Richard T. Smith, President, NAACP New Jersey State Conference

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