



PRESS RELEASE

Statement from Attorney General Frosh - Reflecting on Events of the Past Year and the Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

BALTIMORE, MD (January 18, 2021) – Statement from Attorney General Brian E. Frosh commemorating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

“This year we commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday with heavy hearts. Not since his death over half a century ago has such widespread tragedy and heartache underscored how much of his work remains unfinished.

“The year began with the failure to oust a president who has done more than any leader in modern U.S. history to repudiate Dr. King’s animating vision that love triumphs over hate. It ended with white supremacists violently storming the U.S. Capitol, the seat of American democracy. In between was the devastation of a pandemic that has upended American life. But its destruction was not even-handed; COVID-19 dealt its greatest blows to our communities of color. Leaving more black and brown people ill, unemployed, evicted, and hungry, this national tragedy laid bare the racial inequities and injustice against which Dr. King fought, and which plague us still, more than 50 years on.

“And then George Floyd was killed. With his brutal murder memorialized on video for all the world to see, we watched for nine excruciating minutes - and were finally forced to acknowledge - what black Americans have known since long before Dr. King decried the racism and indifference to black lives reflected in the searing moment of George Floyd’s last breath.

“As more tragic killings followed - from Breonna Taylor to Ahmaud Arbery and so many others - the only glimmer of hope was the outpouring of people from all walks of life who took to the streets in outrage. Their demand was that this time, these deaths would not be in vain. This time, calls for reform would not be just words, as protests subsided and people moved on.

“In Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery Story, Dr. King said, ‘True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.’ In this moment so fraught with division and fear, Dr. King’s wisdom must guide us. We must usher in long overdue police reforms. We must take aim at the systemic inequities and structural racism that underlie the disproportionate suffering unmasked by COVID-19. Laws and policies that undermine access to justice - from eviction rules and health care coverage to worker protections and the right to counsel - must be reexamined through the lens of racial equity.

“Together, in the words of Dr. King, we can ‘hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.’ With new urgency, let us summon his moral courage and fierce determination to turn the tragedies of this painful year into a renewed commitment to his quest for justice.”