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**Statement by Maryland Public Defender Natasha M. Dartigue  
on the Killing of Tyre Nichols**

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Again, we mourn the death of a father, son and friend whose life was taken by a savage act of violence at the hands of police. The video revealed 29 year old Tyre Nichols was just one hundred yards from the safety of his mother's home, where five Memphis police officers brutally kicked and beat him into critical condition. Days later he succumbed to his injuries.

Black people are killed by police at significantly higher rates than any other racial group nationwide. This tragedy has been watched numerous times and sickens all of us. A young, Black life brutally cut short at the hands of police who exist in a system riddled with misconduct and excessive force. Black men deserve to grow old. As leaders in the criminal legal arena, OPD is vigilant in our demand for accountability, transparency and professionalism in policing across Maryland.

Sincere condolences and heartfelt prayers go out to the Nichols family and friends. I also want to recognize the trauma experienced and triggered among members of our local community, many of whom have also experienced police violence personally or through loved ones, sometimes fatally. This is a systemic scourge that public defenders see and fight every day, and we continue to call on our criminal justice partners to address the safety and mental health needs of members of the Black community who are targeted and harmed by police violence.

*If you or a loved one **need help** dealing with trauma, **please call or text 988** to be connected with trained specialists, who will provide support and, if needed, share resources.*

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