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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

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Department of Justice Announces Investigation of the Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government and Louisville Metro Police Department

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland announced today that the Department of Justice has opened a pattern or practice investigation into the Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government (Louisville Metro) and the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD). The investigation will assess all types of force used by LMPD officers, including use of force on individuals with behavioral health disabilities or individuals engaged in activities protected by the First Amendment. The investigation will assess whether LMPD engages in discriminatory policing, and also whether it conducts unreasonable stops, searches, seizures, and arrests, both during patrol activities and in obtaining and executing search warrants for private homes. The investigation will include a comprehensive review of LMPD policies, training, and supervision, as well as LMPD's systems of accountability, including misconduct complaint intake, investigation, review, disposition, and discipline.

"There are approximately 18,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in this country. In each one, dedicated officers put themselves in harm's way to protect others," said Attorney General Garland. "Promoting public trust between communities and law enforcement is essential to making both communities and policing safer. Our enforcement efforts, as well as our grant-making and other support, will contribute to achieving that end and to protecting the civil rights of everyone in our country."

Department of Justice officials informed Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, LMPD Chief Erika Shields, County Attorney Mike O'Connell, and Louisville Metro Council President David James of the investigation. As part of this investigation, the Department of Justice will reach out to community groups and members of the public to learn about their experiences with LMPD.

"The Constitution and federal law require law enforcement officers to treat all people fairly and equitably, regardless of race, disability, or participation in protected First Amendment activities," said Pamela S. Karlan, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The investigation we are announcing today will examine whether these laws are being violated, while also analyzing the root causes of any violations we may find."

The investigation is being conducted pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 which prohibits state and local governments from engaging in a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers that deprives individuals of rights protected by the Constitution or federal law. The Act allows the Department of Justice to remedy such misconduct through civil litigation. The department will be assessing law enforcement practices under the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, as well as under the Safe Streets Act of 1968 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The investigation will be led by the department's Civil Rights Division and conducted by career attorneys and staff in the Civil Rights Division and in the Civil Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Kentucky. Individuals with relevant information are encouraged to contact the Department of Justice via email at Community.Louisville@usdoj.gov or by phone at 1-844-920-1460. Individuals can also report civil rights violations regarding this or other matters using the Civil Rights Division's reporting portal, available at www.civilrights.justice.gov.

Additional information about the Civil Rights Division is available on its website at www.justice.gov/crt. Additional information about the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Kentucky is available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdky>.

Information specific to the Civil Rights Division's Police Reform Work can be found here: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>.

Component(s):

Civil Rights Division

Civil Rights - Special Litigation Section

Office of the Attorney General

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