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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AFT-Maryland Statement on Guilty Verdict in Murder Trial of Derek Chauvin

The verdict convicting Derek Chauvin was a glimmer of hope reminding us that when law enforcement officers go beyond the scope of their duty and kill citizens, they will be held accountable for their actions. It remains impossible for me to believe that anyone could have looked at the video where Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck and return a not-guilty verdict. However, history of police violence in the United States tells us the possibility of Chauvin being acquitted was a real one. That's why so many watched with anticipation, anxiety and bated breath as the verdict was announced.

For some, this verdict was a cause of a moment of joy. The joy isn't celebrating Derek Chauvin going to prison, the joy is that our fellow Americans saw our lives as valuable and ones that matter; so much so that someone is held accountable for our death. This verdict doesn't bring George Floyd back and won't reunite him with his family including his beautiful daughter who still mourns him. This verdict does however begin to rebuild the trust that the Black community has lost in the American justice system. The failures of the American justice system time and again to hold law enforcement officers accountable for their actions had fractured that trust in almost irreparable ways. This is a welcomed and needed first step in rebuilding that trust. Hopefully, this step reminds Black Americans that their lives matter. Now, we can believe if someone, even someone in law enforcement, takes our life, the justice system will seek accountability. Let this verdict encourage us that justice is within reaching distance if we continue to do the work; and above all let this verdict bring peace to George Floyd's family.

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