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OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

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50th Anniversary Commemoration of the March Down Woodward Avenue

DETROIT-- Today we have gathered here at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Senior High School and educational center – reflecting the yet unrealized dreams of many young people who are part of an even brighter and broader future than those who came before them.

It has been 50 years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. walked down the streets of Woodward Avenue in the city of Detroit to begin a collection from the bank of Freedom and Justice. He would later declare at the mall in Washington, DC in August 1963 that the check has come back marked insufficient funds.

Even though the check came back marked insufficient funds, Dr. King still declared to the world that he had a Dream; That Dream was for people to be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. The Dream was for jobs, justice and peace! The Dream was for equal opportunity from the highest levels of government, to the most humble corners of our community. The Dream was for black, white, brown, red and yellow people to let freedom ring from every hill, mountain, dusty road or paved highway in our nation.

The Detroit Branch NAACP - along with labor, faith-based, community, business and grassroots organizations from every corner of our state - came together to commemorate this historic march first in June, 1993 – after 30 years and again, in June, 2003 – celebrating 40 years. Thanks to the likes of Rev. Dr. C.L. Franklin, Judge James Del Rio, community activist Tony Brown, Rev. Albert Cleage, the late UAW leader Walter Reuther and many others – Detroit led the way towards the great march that the world would come to know as the occasion in which Dr. King declared to everyone who could hear that, “I Have a Dream.”

This year on June 22nd, we once again – in collaboration with faith-based, labor, every ethnic group and all persons who believe in freedom and justice – we will celebrate 50 years of progress and achievement. We must remember it has been 50 years since the Dream occurred, 50 years since the death of civil rights leader Medgar Evers while in his driveway at home in Mississippi, 50 years since 4 little black girls were killed while in church in Birmingham on that bombed out Sunday morning, 50 years since John F. Kennedy was shot and killed during a presidential visit in the state of Texas, 100 years since the birth of the mother of the modern civil rights movement Rosa Parks, 150 years since Mr. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation following the constant struggle for freedom of the likes of Harriett Tubman and Frederick Douglass.

We are here today to announce and to invite everyone, regardless of location and station, to join with us as we say, **“50 Years Later: We Shall Not Default on Our Freedom!”** This march comes at a particularly significant time in the history of our state and nation.

As President Barack Obama, who is the actualization of the Dream of Dr. King, sits as our first African American president – now beginning his second term, the Dream has not been in vain. As we observe mayors, a governor, a Democrat and Republican Senator currently in the

US Senate who happen to be African American, with over 10,000 elected black officials across the nation with the ability of people of color to live where you want, work where you please and attend college or universities without the necessity for federal troops to provide for your safety – the Dream has not been in vain.

Yet at the same time, we are mindful that we still need jobs, justice and peace. We are mindful that democracy is under attack. We are mindful that everyone is not pleased with the changing realities that are visible within our own nation. We are reminded that we must protect the Dream so that it will not become a nightmare.

This is why we will celebrate - not just a Dream, but a continuous plan - that emerged from the hopes and aspirations of Martin Luther King, Jr. The Dream lives on because there is work that is still to be done.

On Friday, June 21st, we will have a series of strategy sessions dealing with the rights of workers and the necessity for organization, education as a doorway to opportunity, stopping the violence and youth leadership, jobs and entrepreneurship, voting rights and people empowerment, immigration and the diversity of our nation.

The March will begin at the corner of Woodward and Forest Avenues at 9am on Saturday, June 22nd and will proceed to Hart Plaza for a community rally and celebration in honor of the Dream. Everyone must remember that before you can go to Washington, DC, you must first come by the city with the Big D – that is, of course, Detroit!

We invite all people to join with us for this historic occasion.

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