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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Official Press Statement: Proposed Four Day Extension of Detroit Curfew**

**DETROIT** – Good afternoon to the Honorable Members of Detroit City Council. Over 100 years ago, one of the founders of the NAACP, W.E.B. DuBois, indicated that “the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the problem of the color line”. As one perceives the impact of segregation, unfair treatment, and exclusion on the part of many regarding those of black and brown hue from around our nation, one can still see that the problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is still a problem of the color line. From New York, Texas, South Carolina, Detroit, to California; we have witnessed incidents involving mistreatment, either intentionally or even in a few cases exponentially, resulting in the loss of the lives of black and brown children and adults.

We have been blessed in the city of Detroit that to this point, we have not yet experienced incidents that have inflamed the communities, as exemplified by the most recent situations in Ferguson and Baltimore. For that we are all grateful and remain hopeful that together we can address the issues of poverty, exclusion, joblessness, and a loss of recreational opportunities that lead our city in the direction of One Detroit for everyone, as opposed to a Detroit for those who have and those who have not.

The proposed extension of the curfew in the city of Detroit gives unnecessary credence to the often discussed issue of only targeting people of color, in situations such as this. The real question of whether or not curfews curtail violence, or promote a safer community, has never been empirically substantiated to our knowledge. However, the question of maintaining civil liberty as a necessity for our democracy has been substantiated since the founding of our nation.

We believe that the imposition of an extended curfew upon the young people in our city, and let us be very clear, whether intentional by direct action or consequential by unintentional actions, the consequences will be the same negative systemically, stereotyping and racially profiling. Even conservative columnist Nolan Finley of the Detroit News writes:

*“Don’t close down Detroit to city kids. I walked past Hart Plaza on my way to the Downtown Fireworks two years ago, at just about the same time the police were herding a large group of teenagers into patty*

wagons, vans and busses. They were mostly younger teens, many were frightened and crying, and they were almost exclusively black. At the same time, hundreds of white kids were strolling past them with their blankets, picnic baskets and parents, heading towards prime viewing seats on the Detroit Riverfront. The optics were jarring. I wondered what message those scared black kids were processing about their place in this City and in this world. I know appearances can be deceiving, but the teenagers in the police vans, didn't look like trouble makers. They didn't look any different than the kids on the outside of the van, except for their skin color. And they wanted the same thing...to be part of a festive evening, and see some fireworks."

Ladies and gentlemen, ***Detroit Is Better Than That!*** These young people are our sons and daughters, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandchildren, our neighbors' kids. Let us not blame them for simply being out there to enjoy the fireworks in their own city, where their parents pay taxes, live and work, while others come into this city, enjoy the benefits from the city and then go back home without any consequences. If we are not implementing a curfew for ball games, hockey games, hoe down, low down, show down, electronic shows, grand prix, or any other festivals that may involve drunkenness and disorderly conduct, with no mass arrests, no folks lined up on the streets or put in patty wagons because of their misbehavior, then we should not be doing it to our own children.

We do want safety. We want to be safe all over the city of Detroit. This is bigger than just the fireworks or Riverdays. It's about the days going forward and a summer and winter that is still a challenge for all of us. We do want to work with the Police Department. We want no one hurt. We want everyone to have a safe and great time in our city. However, we are reminded that other cities with even greater problems, i.e. Waco, Texas, where motorcycle gangs came in, shot nine people dead, using guns, knives, chains, tire irons, with over 20 people hospitalized, nearly 200 arrested, who put a hit out on the police department, calling for back up from gangs across the nation, were allowed to sit in the middle of the street with no hand cuffs, no patty wagons and to use their cell phones to make personal calls as they waited to be taken in by the police, had no such imposition. We saw no four day extension of curfews, no mass arrests, no coming down on the people who live in Waco, Texas, along with other cities.

If Seattle, Washington with its annual Mayday riots based upon the call for justice for the past three years, resulting in assaults on police, obstruction of justice, vandalism, failure to disperse, recovery of weapons...if students by the thousands at the University of Michigan or Michigan State University, after winning or losing the NCAA Championships, can throw from their windows couches, furniture, burn up cars in the middle of the street in jubilant celebration or emotional frustration, throughout all hours of the night, with no mass arrests, no extended curfew, no lock down in place in the cities of Ann Arbor or East Lansing, Michigan, and life goes on, then ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that Detroiters should be treated the same. Separate and unequal is still unacceptable in the year 2015. We urge the Council to vote "NO" on this proposal.

*The Detroit Branch NAACP is the largest branch in the Association. For more information please call (313) 871-2087.*

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