

**For Immediate Release
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Senator DeSteph Statement

The last few months have been hard for us as a community. The pandemic, quarantine, civil unrest, and anniversary of our tragic mass shooting, have left us all shaken. Like you, I have been disturbed by recent events and wish to share some thoughts.

Mr. Floyd's death was reprehensible, shocking to witness, and completely unnecessary. The actions of the involved officer, and lack of intervention by his colleagues, was unequivocally abhorrent. These individuals violated their sworn oaths, abused their authority, and have eroded the trust of their community. As I'm sure you are already aware, all four individuals have been arrested and now await trial.

I recognize that the ensuing protests were not just about Mr. George Floyd. I do understand that a number of other incidents have occurred across the country that have also contributed to the depletion of trust in our nation's law enforcement and in many respects, the entire criminal justice system.

Let's be clear: I reject all forms of racism, harassment, and other discriminatory practices and offer my full support to anyone who has been subjected to these injustices. I know these are challenging times for many people, and I assure you that I am committed to listening to my constituents, facilitating better relationships, and taking whatever action I can to advance the cause of justice for all.

I must also convey my steadfast support for law enforcement. I acknowledge that the actions of a few have caused many people deep concern, anxiety, hurt, and tremendous pain, but I am also confident those few do not represent the vast majority of individuals serving in this noble profession. Our law enforcement agencies are represented by people of every race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity, and they are an essential institution in our civilized society. Their efforts contribute to the safety and security of all Americans.

Nationally, there have been a number of calls to "Defund the Police." This couldn't be a more misguided and dangerous proposition. Now more than ever, law enforcement agencies need funding to ensure access to more education, training, and equipment, such as less-lethal force options. Limiting the funds of law enforcement agencies would strain their ability to provide additional de-escalation techniques, cultural awareness training, community engagement opportunities, mental health and crisis intervention services, fair and impartial policing strategies, implementation of new technologies and the recruitment of minorities to help improve the diversity of their workforces, better reflecting the community. Stripping agencies of funding will only serve as an obstacle to progress.

Thank you to all who have reached out during these challenging times. Your calls, emails, and visits are welcomed and encouraged. Together we will do what we have always done—work collectively toward what is best for our community. I am honored to serve as the Senator representing the 8th District.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill DeSteph".