



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

## Statement From Senator Liz Krueger On The Ongoing Protests In New York City

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"At this time of massive protests against the treatment of black Americans by some police officers, and the lack of accountability for those officers, I add my voice to those of my colleagues of color and the movement leaders and activists in the street, in urging all those who need to express their anger and grief to do so non-violently. While the overwhelming majority of those protesting are practicing non-violence, looting and violence by a few do not serve the cause of justice. There are even stories of white supremacists intentionally mixing with peaceful protestors to trigger violence with the police. In addition, widely-shared and televised scenes of overaggressive and dangerous actions by some police only heighten the justified outrage of those protesting.

"At the same time, while we must protect the lives and livelihoods of all New Yorkers, we must not, as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, be "more devoted to order than to justice." We must not lose sight of the root cause of both the original non-violent protests and the violence that has developed alongside those protests in the last few days. Black Americans have exhausted every democratic avenue to change a system that allows them to be murdered with impunity in broad daylight. When they and their allies took to the streets last week to protest police violence, they were met with yet more violence from the police. It is deeply hypocritical for anyone to speak out today about violence against property in our city if they remained silent yesterday in the face of violence against the lives of our black neighbors. And lest we forget, we are all still reeling from a pandemic that has highlighted the enormous medical and economic inequities in our country based on skin color.

"What we need now is threefold. In the immediate term, we need active leadership from the Mayor, the Governor, and the Police Commissioner to de-escalate the situation. They must clearly separate their response to non-violent protest from their response to vandalism and looting. And they must demonstrate that there will be accountability for the inappropriate level of force and violence used against protestors from the outset. A smarter, calmer, more

rational response to those who are non-violently exercising their First Amendment rights will mean that police resources can be deployed to those areas where they are actually needed.

"In the medium term, City and State leaders must act quickly to show that we have heard the cries of those on the streets. This means, for example, passing police reforms like the repeal of the 50-a statute that limits access to disciplinary records; de-escalating police practices when responding to people with mental illness, the homeless, and youth; increasing investment in food, housing assistance, and job opportunities in our poorest neighborhoods; and passing the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act to end marijuana prohibition and invest in those communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the misguided 'War on Drugs.'

"In the long term we must commit ourselves to addressing the structural, systemic racism that results in significantly diminished outcomes for black people and other people of color in education, healthcare, employment, the criminal justice system, and many other fronts.

"For years, protesters have chanted "no justice, no peace." I hear this phrase not as a threat, but as a warning and a statement of fact. Peace is not achieved simply by a lack of violence. A truly peaceful society, one where we can all go about our own business unmolested and without fear, can only be achieved by first creating a just society. Only by working for justice and equity will we ensure that our city, our state, and our country are able to emerge from the multiple crises we are facing."

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