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**PRESS RELEASE: FRANKLIN COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY FORMALLY ANNOUNCES
NEW ADVISORY BOARD ON EQUITY AND RACE**

Our national conversations surrounding racial justice certainly intersect with the field we refer to as “criminal justice.” Indeed, it unfortunately often takes up most of the conversation, and usually only meaningfully occurs at an emotionally charged national flashpoint. Time and again, the presumably unintended implication is that we must exclusively focus upon potential reforms to criminal justice and policing in order to achieve racial justice and reconciliation, regardless of whether the intersection may be due to causes or effects of longstanding racial inequities within systems and structures totally outside of criminal justice and policing. So while this focus is frustratingly narrow within the bigger picture, the implications of race and criminal justice nonetheless demand an open-minded inspection and a sharing of perspectives, leading to pragmatic reform.

To that end, in the Summer of 2020, the following community members agreed to join the newly-formed District Attorney’s Advisory Board on Race and Equity (in alphabetical order): Co-Chairperson Maria Banks, Ismael El-Guemra, Adam Keath, Saige Keyes, Michaela Ramos, Co-Chairperson Lance Walker, LaShan Wilkinson, Serena Wilkinson, Dr. Linda Thomas Worthy and Marvin Worthy.

The Board meets bi-monthly, and its basic purpose is to generally advise the District Attorney. The board assists in identifying gaps of injustice and racial inequities that exist in our current justice systems and community, and helps build collaborative and supportive relationships that create safe, nonjudgmental spaces between the citizens of this community and law enforcement. These personal relationships build genuine trust, as well as a bilateral understanding. There are no opposing “sides” comprised of persons of color versus law enforcement or vice versa, and the formation of this board illustrates the philosophical and moral choice by law enforcement to actively denounce outside efforts to manufacture that kind of division.

The shared values of the Board members are: teamwork, unity, civility, mutual respect, decency, intellectual consistency and honesty, humility, open- mindedness, truth and kindness.

The By-Laws are attached.