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POST OFFICE BOX 44003
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804
(225) 342-7342
FAX: (225) 342-0364
email: caucusb@legis.la.gov
www.llbc.louisiana.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chairman: Representative Edward C. "Ted" James, II
Executive Director: Cynthia Buggage
(225) 342-7342 Office • (225) 376-5940 Fax

The LLBC Expresses Disappointment in the Failure to Pass Restrictions for Qualified Immunity

Baton Rouge, Louisiana. HB 609, a vital part of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus' agenda authored by Representative Edmond Jordan, was rejected yesterday in the Senate Judiciary B committee. HB 609 deals with qualified immunity, which traditionally rendered police officers and other public employees virtually immune from lawsuits when they, usually unintentionally, violate certain rights or laws. Leadership and members of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus are disappointed in the rejection of such an essential piece of legislation.

HB 609 would have prohibited qualified immunity for officers as a defense in civil lawsuits only in certain instances. It would have declared that qualified immunity does not apply as a defense for claims of wrongful death, physical injury, or personal injury caused by police officers through the reasonable use of physical force.

Chairman of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus, Representative Ted James, said, "My fellow caucus members and I are disappointed to see this legislation fail to pass, as it allowed us to take the necessary steps toward police reform. Physical force has often been explained as a necessary defense mechanism but has been proven unnecessary and fatal in most cases, especially those we have seen recently. We in the Black Caucus are working to move Louisiana forward on these racially unjust matters, and we need legislation such as this to grow and to protect our communities."

Representative Edmond Jordan (LLBC Secretary) responded, "While I'm disappointed in the vote yesterday, I realize that there is a difference between stumbling and falling. Yesterday was a stumble. But as we navigate these sensitive issues surrounding the government sanctioned misconduct against Black people in Louisiana, we must recognize that our constituents have expressed to us that the status quo is no longer acceptable. Aaron Bowman and Ronald Greene are the results of the status quo."

While it is incumbent upon us to press forward with legislation that seeks equity and positive solutions, it is also incumbent upon our colleagues across the aisle to seek understanding and knowledge as it relates to issues of race. I look forward to the day where our humanity has equal value; so that Louisiana can reach her ultimate potential."

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Established in 1977, the primary purpose of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus is to raise the quality of life for those underrepresented, the indigent and working people through legislation, education and economic development.