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OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

66th ANNUAL FIGHT FOR FREEDOM FUND DINNER DON'T REST ON YOUR FREEDOM!

DETROIT –After nearly two years of COVID-19, we are pleased to begin a new journey along the march towards freedom and equity at one of the nation’s most iconic civil rights events called the Detroit NAACP Fight For Freedom Fund Dinner. It is scheduled for Sunday, October 3, 5pm, at the TCF Center. Due to the current situation of COVID-19, we will not enjoy the regular 10,000 guests at our event. We are following all protocols according to the state and national health standards for this assembly. However, we will still enjoy a 1st class event and one to remember for all who attend.

Our theme for this year is **Don't Rest On Your Freedom**. It comes amidst the attack on our democracy by people from within our own nation. We have witnessed the introduction of over 400 voter suppression bills and the adoption of laws in over 18 states to reduce and take back the vote of Blacks, browns, young people, women, and seniors. We must stand up and speak out. The NAACP is needed now more than ever before is not just a cliché to be uttered, it is a reality to be activated. In the words of Congressman John R. Lewis *“we all must engage in some good trouble.”* Our nation and our future depend on our activism in these very critical times. The state of Michigan is not exempt from the tyranny of voter suppression bills, with the “blind 39” that have been introduced in the Senate. There is even an attempt to conduct a petition drive called Pure Michigan Vote, a so-called “secure Michigan vote” to go around the Governor of the state of Michigan who has indicated she will not support voter suppression of any form in her administration. There are those who would rather end democracy as we know it and begin authoritarianism so they can dictate it. They disregard the very lives and the voices of the people who may no longer be able to celebrate it. This we must never allow.

In the words of Dr. Martin L. King Jr., *“we know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed.”* In that regard, we are pleased to announce the special guests and awardees for this historic event. We will present two Great Expectation Awards. The first awardee will be Detroit Police Officer Bryant L. George. Officer George is the founder and operator of the Game Game Mobile and More LLC. He goes around the city motivating and advocating positive leadership for youth throughout the community. He uses his Game Game Mobile to drive inspiration home to young people in the local neighborhoods. He is an active participant in the Police Athletic League and a professional entrepreneur while serving as a member of the Detroit’s finest. Our second Great Expectation Award will be presented to Ms. Arian S. Reed of Atlanta, Co-Founder and General Partner of the Fearless Fund. Ms. Reed has motivated thousands of women of color across the country with motivation and self-determination. She has led them with investments in and corporations throughout America, among them Walt Disney, Universal, Sony Pictures, and more.

We are pleased to announce our W.E.B. Du Bois Freedom and Justice Award recipient will be Attorney John E. Johnson Jr. Esq. Atty Johnson is the new Executive Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, former Executive Director of the Detroit NAACP, former Executive Director of the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, Deputy Executive Director of the Legal Aid and Defenders Association, and Corporation Counsel of the city of Detroit. The Ida B. Wells Freedom and Justice Award will be presented to the honorable Congresswoman Joyce M. Beatty, Chair of The Congressional Black Caucus. Congresswoman Beatty represents the 3rd district of Columbus, Ohio.

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She has been a major voice to protect voting rights, resulting in her being arrested at the nation's capital in the fight for democracy. She is a leading voice for advancing the For The People Voting Rights Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This is particularly important for Michigan and the nation as we face the struggle to secure and expand voting rights for all Americans. As our nation prepares for infrastructure development, following the devastation of hurricane Ida in the southeast, fires and drought in the northwest, and even flooding in the midwest, community re-development must be a priority. We in Detroit must certainly Build Back Better.

We are excited to welcome Secretary of HUD Marcia Fudge to serve as our keynote speaker. Secretary Fudge, former Representative of Ohio's 11th district is also a past Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. She is a fierce advocate for fair housing and expanded housing for Americans across the country. She has been a voice for civil and human rights. She believes in the promises of America to provide opportunity and inclusion for all its citizens. We look forward to this tremendous alignment of stars in this era sometimes shaded with more darkness than light and more fear than hope.

This comeback dinner will be one to remember. I want to thank all of our sponsors who continue to support Detroit's jewel of civil rights. We are inspired to continue the work as supported by our Senior Corporate Chair Mr. Gary Torgow, Executive Chairman of the Huntington Bank, and Mr. Ray Curry, International President of The United Auto Workers, serving as our Senior Community Chair.

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