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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Attorney General Kaul Statement on Kenosha County District Attorney Decision in Officer-Involved Shooting of Jacob Blake

MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul released the below statement in response to Kenosha County District Attorney Michael Graveley’s announcement of his decision not to bring charges in connection with the officer-involved shooting of Jacob Blake.

“Irrespective of the decision announced today, this case is a tragedy. An incident that unfolded in just a few minutes will have a lifelong impact on Mr. Blake, as well as others.

“The past several months have been extraordinarily challenging for the Kenosha community. We need to work together, peacefully, to ensure that Kenosha—and all of Wisconsin—comes out of this difficult time stronger.

“There is a pressing need for reform of our criminal justice system. Across the state, there are dedicated public servants in law enforcement whose work makes their communities safer. But the system we have in place—which, unlike the criminal justice systems in many other states, has not been significantly reformed in recent years—has produced staggering and unacceptable racial disparities.

“This past June, I called for several actions: increasing community-oriented policing; expanding de-escalation, implicit bias, cultural competency, and critical incident training; broadening Wisconsin DOJ’s limited authority to enforce civil rights laws; enacting bail reform; funding a hate-crime hotline; and prohibiting an officer’s disciplinary records from being sealed when the officer applies for employment at another law enforcement agency.

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“In addition, Wisconsin should adopt a statewide use-of-force standard providing that officers’ primary duty is to preserve life and that officers must use de-escalation techniques to avoid force whenever possible. And law enforcement officers conducting patrol activities should have body-worn cameras. While many agencies in Wisconsin use such recording devices, that practice is still far from uniform—in significant part because of cost. Funding from the legislature to defray these costs would lead to more widespread use of this technology.

“Reforms should also include improving our emergency detention system and strengthening enforcement and supporting victim services in certain areas in which there has long been under-enforcement, such as white-collar crime and violent crimes that are disproportionately committed against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.

“We need policy changes that will reduce the likelihood that officer-involved critical incidents will occur and that will make our criminal justice system fairer and more equitable.”

Consistent with standard practice, the Wisconsin Department of Justice has made documents from the investigation publicly available, except to the extent that there is a specific basis for redaction or nondisclosure, such as protection of the confidentiality of personal identifying information. Those documents can be found here: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/office-open-government/department-justices-responses-public-records-requests>.