

# Police Reform Advocates Call for Nassau's Top Cop to Resign

BY **AMBER WILKINS** - JUNE 21, 2021



Patrick Ryder. (Courtesy Nassau County Police Department Facebook page)

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Police reform advocates are calling for Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder to resign, citing recent racial comments that have sparked controversy, but the top cop says he's staying put.

A coalition that includes the Long Island Advocates for Police Accountability (LIAFPA), groups of minority police officers, civil rights advocates, and others said Ryder had "three strikes" and should be out of a job. The strikes, according to the advocates, were the commissioner not acknowledging the fact that Nassau police arrest more minorities than whites, downplaying racial disparities in policing, and suggesting that the reason there aren't more Black police officers is that many minority applicants weren't raised by both parents under one roof.

“Mr. Ryder, you’re out, and we’re calling for you to resign, because you, through your actions, have proven that you cannot address the issues of race when it comes to policing in Nassau County,” civil rights attorney and LIAFPA member Fred Brewington said Thursday during a news conference outside of his office in Hempstead. During a police academy graduation ceremony the next day, Ryder said he’s not stepping down.

The calls for Ryder to resign come after local governments across New York State were required to pass police reform legislation by April 1 following nationwide racial justice protests calling for an end to police brutality after a white Minneapolis police officer killed George Floyd, who was Black, in May 2020. Critics, including state Attorney General Letitia James, balked at Nassau’s reform plan because it did not create a civilian complaint review board to add a layer of accountability.

LIAFPA examined 2017 Nassau data that showed that for every white person that was arrested in the county, 5.3 African Americans and 2.3 Latinos were arrested, but when the group brought this to Ryder’s attention before police reform passed, the commissioner failed to recognize the disparities, according to Brewington.

Later, during a hearing on the reforms when Nassau Legislator Carrie Solages (D-Elmont) asked Ryder if he agreed that Black people are arrested at a higher rate than white people, Ryder responded stating that arrests are “based on probable cause.” Then, when asked about whether he thought prejudices against race contributed to the disparities in arrests, Ryder stated, “not at all.”

And most recently, Ryder told Newsday in an interview that “broken homes” are the reason there aren’t more Black and Hispanic police officers. The newspaper reported that from 2012 to 2018, only 67 Black applicants for law enforcement were hired out of the 6,539 Black applicants. Both Nassau and Suffolk police have been under federally monitored consent decrees for decades to resolve earlier hiring discrimination lawsuits.

Charles Billups, Chairman of The Grand Council of The Guardians, a Black law enforcement organization, stated that “based on his statements, it sounds like he just

wants to keep things as status quo.” In Billups’ view, that shows the unwillingness of the police department to be reflective of the communities that it serves.

Regarding Ryder’s comments “his implication is clear,” said Dennis Jones, a former New York City police officer. “Blacks, you can’t make it because your home doesn’t provide support.”

On Monday, Nassau County Executive Laura Curran issued a statement supporting Ryder, saying she has “full confidence” in his leadership of the department and that “he will be staying in his position.”

“Commissioner Ryder has championed the community policing model now being embraced nationwide as part of reform efforts,” she said. “We will continue to focus on keeping Nassau safe while moving forward with police reform that builds trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, including implementation of body cameras by the end of the year and a new committee to help diversify the department.”

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