

Press Release

Lebanon County NAACP Branch 26AA

July 19, 2023

In response to the statement issued by Lebanon County District Attorney Pier Hess Graf yesterday, President Tony Fields of the Lebanon County NAACP offers the following statement:

We applaud the decision of the Disciplinary Board of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to reprimand Lebanon County District Attorney Pier Hess Graf in response to our complaint that her conduct in this case violated the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct and the canons of ethics that apply to her as a county district attorney.

Among other things, the Disciplinary Board's decision underscores the value of civil rights advocacy organizations like Lebanon County Branch 26AA of the NAACP in ensuring that the rights of all citizens are protected and that our criminal justice system genuinely serves the public interest. The ruling offers a powerful reminder of the critical importance of checks and balances in a democratic system, and that ordinary citizens, acting collectively, have the power to hold public officials accountable for their actions.

We are disappointed that the reprimand was classed as "private" and not "public" because we feel the public's right to know is important, especially in this case. We also take issue with D.A. Graf's claim in her statement that the statement she issued, "and the accountability which comes with it, is my choice alone." We disagree, and hold that accountability to the public is not a "choice" made by elected public officials, but instead is a fundamental and essential part of their job.

Now that D.A. Graf has made public her version of this "private reprimand," we hope that the Disciplinary Board makes its findings in this case public in their entirety. The Board's decision in this case is now partly public, but with the D.A.'s "spin" on it. We also hope that D.A. Graf makes public the "new conflict policy" referenced in her statement.