

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY CITY OF PORTSMOUTH



Main Number: (757) 393-8581 · Fax: (757) 393-5135

MEDIA RELEASE

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Portsmouth, VA

Contact: CaShea Coleman

Senior Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney/Public Information Officer

colemanc@portsmouthva.gov · (757) 870-7861

PORTSMOUTH COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY STEPHANIE MORALES CONTINUING THE FIGHT FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND EQUITY

PORTSMOUTH, VA — The Portsmouth Commonwealth Attorney's office, as a whole, is committed to holding officers who choose to use excessive force accountable. In the wake of the national tragedies surrounding the senseless and untimely deaths of Ahmad Aubrey, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others, we reflect on our own hometown senseless tragedy. In August of 2015, Portsmouth Commonwealth Attorney, Stephanie Morales, announced that our office would seek an indictment against then Officer Stephen Rankin for the on-duty shooting death of William Chapman, II on April 22, 2015. On August 4, 2016, after a seven-day jury trial and a year of pre-trial motions, Stephen Rankin was found guilty of Voluntary Manslaughter. The case was prosecuted by Commonwealth's Attorney Stephanie Morales from beginning to end along with two team members. Ultimately, on March 28, 2019, that conviction was upheld by the Virginia Supreme Court. In the memory of William Chapman, II, we continue the fight.

In a joint statement issued on May 29, 2020, 40 elected prosecutors from across the nation, to include Portsmouth Commonwealth's Attorney Stephanie Morales, joined in a strongly worded statement condemning the despicable and tragic murder of George Floyd, calling for the perpetrators to be held accountable, and demanding that all prosecutors and law enforcement leaders do more to address officer misconduct and racially-biased policing and police brutality. The joint statement enumerates several key reforms, including increased accountability and independent oversight of law enforcement, national databases and reforms that enhance the ability to identify and discharge problematic officers, increased transparency by both law enforcement and prosecutors including more prompt disclosure of body camera footage changes to use of force policies, a commitment by elected prosecutors to no longer seek or accept endorsements or contributions from police departments or unions, and fundamental reimagining of the justice system to prioritize fairness, equity, and community wellbeing. Read the full statement and detailed policy recommendations [here](#).

On June 5, 2020, Portsmouth Commonwealth's Attorney participated in a forum lead by Lucy Lang of the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution with the mothers of Sean Bell and Philando Castile and the sister of Delrawn Small where Portsmouth Commonwealth's Attorney Stephanie Morales called for change to bring the justness back in what is now the Criminal Legal System. [Institute for Innovation in Prosecution- June 5, 2020](#)

The Portsmouth Commonwealth Attorney's Office has demonstrated its commitment for fairness equity, and restorative justice for the Portsmouth community and will continue that fight.

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Stephanie N. Morales, Commonwealth's Attorney
Portsmouth Judicial Center · 1345 Court Street, Suite 105
Portsmouth, Virginia 23704