



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Letitia James**

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Press Release

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## **Garner Case: Public Advocate Letitia James, Legal Aid Society, NYCLU Return to Court to Push Unsealing of Grand Jury Minutes**

*Judge Garnett To Rule On Petitions At A Later Date*

(New York, NY)— Today, New York City Public Advocate Letitia James was joined by the Legal Aid Society, the New York Civil Liberties Union, and other parties at a Richmond County courthouse for oral arguments in an effort to unseal the grand jury proceedings related to the death of Eric Garner on July 17, 2014. Though the parties submitted separate petitions, they were heard by the court collectively.

The Public Advocate has argued that there is no logical reason to maintain grand jury secrecy as the video tape that depicts the circumstances of Mr. Garner's death has been made public, and the identities of those involved are not hidden. Previously, Staten Island District Attorney Daniel Donovan successfully petitioned for limited disclosure of grand jury information.

“This is not about one incident or one death— it is about transparency and a moment within the public consciousness through which we can affect meaningful reform. We know that the grand jury was impaneled for 9 weeks, a considerable amount of time even in cases such as this, yet not a single charge was filed. People around the world have seen the troubling video, and New Yorkers stand alongside the Garner family in seeking answers,” said **New York City Public Advocate Letitia James**.

Additionally, the Garner family has filed an amicus in support of the petitioners.

Judge William Garnett, a longtime Kings County Supreme Court judge assigned to oversee this case, examined the public advocate's authority to open and examine the grand jury testimony. Legal representatives for the public advocate noted that as a citywide public official and an ex-officio Member of the City Council with the authority introduce legislation, oversee the effectiveness of public departments, recommend policy changes, and bring forth litigation in the interest of city residents— Public Advocate Letitia James has a significant role to play in examining the testimony. The public advocate's attorney also noted a report released by the office last year proposing a police body-cameras pilot program— a program later enacted by the administration.

The attorney representing the District Attorney Donovan wrongfully asserted that the parties sought to reveal the identities of the grand jury members, and dubiously questioned Public Advocate James' ability to represent the interest of Staten Island residents.

Judge Garnett stated that he will submit his decision on the petition at a later date.

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