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**STATEMENT: URBAN YOUTH COLLABORATIVE APPALLED BY NYPD ASSAULT ON 14-YEAR-OLD BLACK YOUTH**

NEW YORK, NY—*In response to the assault by NYPD Officer Scalzo of a 14 year-old Black youth in Staten Island, the [Urban Youth Collaborative](#) (UYC) issued the following statement. UYC is the leading coalition in NYC of students organizing to stop the harmful policing and criminalization of young people of color inside and outside of schools.*

“We were outraged to learn about the NYPD assault of Kyonna Robinson, a 14-year-old Black youth, after school in Staten Island on Tuesday. This gruesome attack should have never happened and reflects a moral failing not just of one officer, but also of NYC’s policymakers.

“Officer Scalzo should be immediately fired for this assault. But this is not a bad apple situation that can be fully addressed through individual consequences. For nearly two decades, our warnings to NYC’s elected leaders that police in our schools and communities do not keep us safe have mostly fallen upon deaf ears. When fights break out in our schools, we see school cops consistently respond by escalating these altercations. We see school cops consistently respond to Black youth with more aggression than our white peers. And we see school cops consistently fail to prevent any violence in the first place.

“Policing was designed to harm people of color, and it has, does, and will continue to result in assaults like these, while the Mayor and others seek to take resources away from things we know keep us safe. Assaults like these are tragically predictable in a city that has chosen both to hire 850 new school cops while slashing the education budget and to employ more school cops than counselors, social workers, or restorative justice coordinators.

“The NYPD’s assault on Kyonna took place outside Edwin Markham Middle School, which had its budget [slashed](#) by over \$1 million this year. The school [serves](#) over 1,350 students with just 5 counselors and 1 social worker. Mayor Adams and the City Council must right their wrongs and commit to passing a budget this year that prioritizes our care not our criminalization.

“We stand behind our fellow youth leader and high school junior in Staten Island Brielka Rodriguez, a Make the Road New York member, who said this after learning of the assault:

‘As a young person attending school in Staten Island, I’m shocked and scared to see yet another example of cops around our schools causing us harm. My sister goes to school around the corner from where this happened—what’s going to stop officers from beating up on us too? There is absolutely no excuse for a cop to beat up on anyone—much less a teenager—and Officer Scalzo should be immediately fired for what he did to Kyonna Robinson. As a Black student, this latest incident of police violence outside a school is just another example of why we have been calling for police-free schools for years. Police do not keep us safe in or outside of our schools—instead, we get situations like these where we get hurt by a person that is supposedly coming to protect us.’

“Now more than ever, it’s time for NYC’s leaders to implement solutions to public safety in our schools and communities that are evidence-based and take into account the experiences that youth of color have been sharing all along.”

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