United Way of Delaware Statement: Racial Equity and Social Justice

On behalf of the Board and Staff of United Way of Delaware, I want to first offer our mutual condolences to the families of George Floyd and the many other victims of racial violence in America. I also want to offer my thoughts of support to each person who feels the pain of this incident on a personal level.

In what is perhaps his most memorable speech, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s refers to his children, and in a sense all children of color, and the hope that one day they would be acknowledged not for how they look, but for who they are. “I have a dream,” he said, “that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

Unfortunately, 57 years later, prejudice is still feeding the cancerous diseases of hatred and racism. At a time when our nation is mourning the loss of more than 100,000 souls, a disproportionate number of whom are black, to the non-discriminating disease of COVID-19, America must now also mourn the brutal death of yet another African American whose life was snuffed out in a vicious act of police brutality. George Floyd’s murder will forever mark a crossroad in American history. The question before us now is, which road shall we follow?

For more than 70 years in Delaware, and more recently in Salem County, NJ, United Way of Delaware (UWDE) has been a leader in addressing the many racial disparities that exist in our culture. Among other things, UWDE works to foster equity in education, youth advancement, and family financial stability. We believe that by improving outcomes in those (and other) areas, we can advance the common good across Delaware.

But the current situation demands that we do even more. In light of the George Floyd murder and the civic unrest it has sparked in Delaware and across the nation, UWDE is stepping up and speaking out regarding racial harmony. We believe that part of the solution must be an open, honest, peaceful dialogue about issues like racial inequity, generational poverty, and social justice. These problems have been haunting Delaware for decades and will only grow more intractable if left unaddressed, holding back not just those who are impacted directly, but all Delawareans in every community in every corner of our beloved state. We need every sector of society—civic leaders, politicians, educators, business people, labor leaders, faith leaders, nonprofits and concerned individuals—to join us on this road.

But honest dialogue is only the first step. True change will require action. We do not need another special commission, blue ribbon panel or study group. We need genuine reform, and we need it quickly. This will require that people of goodwill transform honest dialogue into collective work to design and implement policies that forever uproot the systemic racism that threatens our mutual progress. United Way of Delaware is ready to help lead in this effort.

Dr. King once said, “There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.” This is the road UWDE has chosen. And now we invite YOU to join us on this journey and, in so doing, to make Delaware one place in America where my children and yours are judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

June 2, 2020