



Statement from our Executive Director on Systemic Racism

To our Coalition Partners,

As our country is filled with grief in response to the murder of George Floyd and countless other Black lives, many of our communities are experiencing deep despair and turmoil. This injustice, as well as the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on communities of color has been a reminder that our country has a deep history of systemic racism - one that puts more value on White lives than Black lives.

Illinois Partners' mission is to protect and support our state's most important resource -the residents of Illinois - by creating a stronger and more stable human services sector. We cannot truly fulfill this mission if we do not address the systemic racism that allows some lives to be protected and valued more than others. And we cannot build a stronger and more stable human service sector if its foundation is not rooted in a real and intentional commitment to justice.

As leaders of nonprofit organizations, I know that there are many of us who don't know what to say right now - or are afraid of saying the wrong thing. As a White woman leader in the nonprofit sector, I must personally and continually reflect on the ways my privilege has given me the opportunity to stay silent in moments of injustice.

I know that many of the health and human service organizations in our coalition have equity as one of their core values. Illinois Partners is one of those organizations. Now is the time to show our staff, our clients, and our communities, that our commitment to equity starts with us. That as leaders, we can model vulnerability and self-reflection to live out this commitment in our work and in our lives.

For my fellow White leaders, here are some resources that I have found to be helpful:

- 1) [How to support your black colleagues](#)
- 2) [What is anti-racism?](#)
- 3) [How does racism show up in nonprofit work?](#)
- 4) [Inequity in leadership in the nonprofit industry](#)
- 5) Reading and journaling through the books: [Me and White Supremacy](#), and [White Fragility](#).

Illinois Partners is committed to building an inclusive and equitable coalition that values and protects Black lives. We can and must do better.

In hope and solidarity,

Lauren Wright

Executive Director of Illinois Partners for Human Service

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