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Director

Employment & Human  
Services partners with the  
community to deliver  
quality services to ensure  
access to resources that  
support, protect, and  
empower individuals and  
families to achieve  
self-sufficiency.

June 12, 2020

Dear EHSD Staff Members,

I am deeply saddened and angered by the recent senseless killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and countless other Black individuals in America. We are undergoing a lot of grief, pain and outrage, and I know that many of you are experiencing the impact in a myriad of ways.

At home, at work and in our communities, we are each endeavoring to reconcile our individual backgrounds and experiences with a multitude of reactions as we bear witness to the most recent protests, media reports, rhetoric, social media, personal conversations and other dialogue and interactions surrounding the tragic and unjust death of Mr. Floyd. Many of us, regardless of our skin color or cultural background, have long recognized systemic racism. Some have spoken against it more strongly than others have. Of course, we know there are many who may not fully relate to the deep pain it causes. However, I believe we can each broaden our own understanding, no matter where we were prior to these events or now.

One of the things that has struck me over the course of the last few weeks has been the renewed nationwide call to recognize the importance of investing in social services, both nationally and at local levels. Those of us in the social service profession know that if individuals have access to education, jobs, mental health resources, medical resources, housing, food, community and connection, these access points help them to ensure their families' health and safety.

We know jobs create wellbeing and opportunity. We know access to early childhood education can lessen disparity later in life. We know that people are safer when connections to supportive networks are intact. We know that access to medical care and coverage increases positive health outcomes.

So, what does it mean to be in a government department focused on social services at this time? It means many things, including that we are needed more than ever before because families are hurting. It means we are responding to a multitude of harms. The harm of COVID-19, of systemic racism, and lack of economic opportunity. In addition, we, better than those in many other professions understand the deep connections between these harms. We know that overall health and wellbeing can have direct connections to social and economic opportunities, and that racism often affects opportunities.

To be in social services right now also means we are at the forefront of a hopeful national conversation. As individuals and as EHSD staff, many of us have dedicated years of work to the improvement of people's lives, as have our community and county partners and members of the public we serve. It is gratifying to see that many innovative ideas and plans – long developed, but not realized yet - may move forward as the society seems more open to re-imagining of the world in which we live together.

We also know that social service departments and agencies are not immune from furthering racism and oppression within our own systems. We will continue pushing ourselves to stay aware of racial bias in order to uphold the much needed social service safety net that is so critical in helping dismantle hurt and racism within our own system.

We may have more questions than answers about what lies ahead. In the coming weeks, we will be creating ways to encourage conversations, education and understanding about racial equity and valuing diversity. You will hear much more about this as plans take shape and we invite your participation. In the meantime, I encourage you to take care of yourselves and, in the spirit of supporting one another, continue sharing your thoughts and feelings with your coworkers, supervisors, managers and directors.

EHSD is committed to maintaining a culture of diversity and inclusion of all people. We all share in the responsibility to respond with meaningful change, and I am wholeheartedly committed to increasing trust and confidence within our department, as well as healing and taking this moment and those ahead to positively move forward with all of you.

With sincere gratitude for what you each bring to EHSD,



Kathy Gallagher  
EHSD Director