George Floyd’s tragic death and the ensuing protests have painfully exposed deep-rooted and long-standing racism in the criminal justice system.

As leaders in Ohio’s public defender community, the members of the Ohio Public Defender Commission, in conjunction with the Office of the Ohio Public Defender, support the Black community and all who are committed to ending systemic racism in the criminal justice system. Black Americans have a right to equal access to justice and equal treatment under the law. And their demands for these inalienable rights must not go unheard.

The members of the Ohio Public Defender Commission share these demands. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to our mission and redouble our efforts to fight, advocate, and help achieve a fair and equitable justice system.

- We will fight against racism, hatred, and intolerance in our communities by continuing to provide leadership, resources, and guidance to attorneys who represent Ohio’s indigent people in the criminal justice system.
- We will advocate for equality and criminal justice reforms through the collection and use of reliable data from the criminal justice system to better inform policy decision makers.
- We will help those seeking reform by providing additional training and education on issues of race and justice.

The events of the past few weeks have shown that pervasive racism exists and can have devastating, even deadly, consequences to persons of color. The members of the Ohio Public Defender Commission recognize our obligation to join and help those who fight for justice and advocate for change. We hope that, as a society, we listen to each other, learn from these tragic events and the long-standing legacy of bias in our country, and work together to end systemic racism in the criminal justice system.