



Date: 6 June 2020

Subject: **Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA Statement**

The Board of Directors of the Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) would like to send its deepest condolences to the families of Ahmaud Arbery, Breona Taylor, and George Floyd who are the latest victims of police violence that disproportionately targets people of color. We also extend our condolences to those who live through the trauma of these killings.

Many of us can only imagine the fear and horror that people of color face. We cannot know what it actually feels like to have to try to teach our children how to possibly avoid being mistreated, harmed, or even killed some day, solely because of the color of their skin.. What we can do is voice outrage, disgust, concern, and sadness regarding racism, hope that the murderers are brought to justice, and pray for better understanding and empathy in these terrible days and every day.

The complexity and inter connectivity of frustrations and resentments have come together to awaken many people to problems which have been ignored, avoided, or misunderstood for decades. It has been distressing and heart wrenching, but it should not be shocking to see the confrontations going on in many cities across the country. It exposes long held practices of discrimination and disregard for the problems that affect those without power or influence.

We are gratified with the turnout and success of the HoCo4 Justice vigil and march in support of black lives at the Mall in Columbia. An event organized and led by Howard County's youth. We hope local and state leaders take to heart what is at stake and move to action on meaningful reforms to ensure the rights of those often trampled upon is protected.

It also has given the opportunity for the HCCA Board to ask questions of ourselves:"What values do we espouse? What lessons are there here for us as an organization?"

We stand for working together. We stand for government accountability and transparency. We stand for giving voice to those whose voices are unheard. We send our deepest condolences to the families of all victims of police violence that has been disproportionately directed at people of color.

To this end, we have the following specific recommendations and specific actions to our County leaders:

1. We call for effective growth mitigation and level of service standards to ensure the county has sufficient police and law enforcement capacity. Strained and stressed capacity, with sustained budget reductions due to lack of growth mitigation will increase violent confrontation. Community policing is resource intensive.

2. We call for the implementation of an effective body camera program. Body camera programs have shown to improve accountability, transparency, reduction in police force, administrative and investigation costs. In 2015, a resolution to establish a Committee on Community Policing was introduced. The committee published a report with recommendations, one of which was to establish a body camera program. Following the report, the body camera pilot program was established with 10 officers and for 45 days in July of 2017. We would like to be informed as to what the status of the use of Body cameras is today.
3. We call for the establishment of a civilian oversight board to improve accountability, increase trust in our institutions, and ensure the administration of disciplinary actions.

We hope our County leaders move on these meaningful actions in the coming days to build trust, accountability, transparency, and a more just treatment of our citizens.

We wish everyone peace and health.

Stu Kohn  
HCCA President