

A MESSAGE FROM THE HAMPDEN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION ON SYSTEMIC RACISM

The Hampden County Bar Association stands with our members and our fellow bar associations across the Commonwealth and the nation in condemning the action and inaction of the Minneapolis police officers that caused George Floyd's senseless death. We condemn racism and all police brutality. We want to express our deepest condolences to the family of George Floyd and those impacted by this tragedy.

The Hampden County Bar Association was founded on the principles of diversity and inclusion. The current events and local protests have made it clear that we need to rise up to help protect civil rights and to combat racism in our community. We understand that words matter, but acting on and following through on those words matters more. Our Board has decided to use this moment in time to effectuate even greater change. While our legal and judicial system in Massachusetts continues to be a national and international model for addressing racism and providing access to justice, we recognize there is room for improvement.

Voices of the public are the backbone of any civic structure. The issues we need to combat and ameliorate require careful planning and the input of many people - litigants, lawyers, court staff, community-based organizations, the district attorney, county sheriff and many others. Our Board wants to hear from anyone who has a suggestion about how it should address systemic racism, police brutality and other civil rights issues. He/she/they are invited to email equality@hcbbar.org.

Our goal is the enhancement of our programming, initiatives and educational opportunities so the HCBA is on the forefront of helping those who want to combat systemic racism and protect civil rights. In the upcoming weeks we intend to issue another press release with specifics about our additional programming, initiatives and educational opportunities - only after hearing from anyone who has a suggestion about how to help.

As members of the bar association and the legal community as a whole, we have a responsibility to do more to reach the goal of equality. Therefore, we call upon our members to join the global conversation about race in this country and to participate in our efforts to improve. Now is a time for self-reflection; to examine the ways our own actions and biases - whether conscious or unconscious - impact our community and then change them. We must hold ourselves to the highest standard of impartial justice. We should seek out and listen to what African-Americans and other people of color are saying in and around our community.

Collectively, we all have a part to play in discovering a solution to systemic racism and police brutality. The Hampden County Bar Association is committed to stand as a leader in our community to achieve equal justice for all.