The staff, faculty and students of WCU Community Mental Health Services and the Department of Psychology join our voices with the many others who speak out against the racism and injustice highlighted by the events of the past few weeks. We are heartbroken that the life of a man could be extinguished in such a publicly dehumanizing way and that his family, friends, and community are left with unbearable suffering and grief. George Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers also reminds us of the untimely deaths of unarmed Black Americans and points to the long history and systemic forms of racism, oppression, and injustice that plague our country. These systemic inequities are tied to a legacy that includes genocide of Indigenous peoples, enslavement of people of African heritage, and xenophobic hatred and violence diminishing the value of human lives. We commit to addressing issues of injustice and inequities in our actions and our services.

We recognize our clients and members of this community are impacted by racial inequities. Many live in fear and apprehension because their lives and the lives of their loved ones are at constant risk and many are the targets of overt prejudice as well as behaviors that are influenced by implicit bias and systemic prejudice. As your care providers, we aim to create a safe space at CMHS for our clients and our staff to share their knowledge and wisdom from their own life experiences.

As psychologists and doctoral students, we use evidence-based methods to study the factors that influence and change behavior. As a discipline, we are uniquely trained to shed light on the conditions that contribute to stereotypes, bias, and racism; to find ways to ameliorate their impact on individuals, families, and communities; and to work towards ending these ills. As professionals, we uphold the objectives of our professional organizations, including to foster the advancement of human rights, fairness, diversity, and inclusion through the application of psychological science, and to use psychology to improve the functioning of institutions, organizations, systems, and communities. As individual faculty and staff members, we commit to deep personal reflection to increase our own awareness. We pledge to work towards dismantling racism and its corrosive effect on those most immediately impacted and society at large. We encourage our students to become agents of personal and community change and commit to eliminating injustice, inequities, and oppression.

To the extent that we strive to be a part of this much needed change, we will fulfill the highest ethical aims of our discipline and our professional organizations. Psychologists and student clinicians are committed to increasing scientific and professional knowledge of behavior and people's understanding of themselves and others and to use such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, organizations, and society. As such, “Psychologists respect and protect civil and human rights” (Preamble, APA Ethical Code).

Staff and faculty of WCU Community Mental Health Services and the Department of Psychology

June 9, 2020