

June 3, 2020

**OPCA and Oregon CHCs Stand With Communities of Color in the Fight for Racial Justice:
Statement by Joan Watson-Patko, Executive Director, and Gil Muñoz, President of the Board**

The Oregon Primary Care Association (OPCA) and community health centers in Oregon stand in solidarity to denounce the horrific killing of George Floyd in Minnesota and many, many other African Americans who have lost their lives to police brutality and racism. We are angry, shocked, appalled, and filled with pain, especially for the men and women of color in this nation who face harm and discrimination simply by going about their daily lives. Mr. Floyd's death, along with that of countless African Americans and other people of color who have suffered a similar fate, and those who continue to experience racial injustices, are a part of a historical legacy of structural racism, both covert and blatant, that pervades our society. We can no longer ignore this painful truth.

Oregon's community health centers have long led the way for social change and were born out of the civil rights and social justice movement of the 1960s. As community based health care providers to over 433,000 Oregonians in more than 232 unique communities around the state, we see the direct effect of physical and mental abuse, stress, and structural policy barriers on the health and wellbeing of our patients. These individuals are often on the receiving end of racism and discrimination simply because of the color of their skin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, income level, immigration, or insurance status.

At OPCA, we uphold the vision of social justice and strive to achieve health equity for all. In light of recent events, we know we must do more if we are to achieve this vision. Today, we are examining our role as an organization in the movement toward racial equity both internally and as a partner in collaboration with health centers, policymakers, and partners statewide. We are taking a holistic approach to social change and recognize we must learn as individuals and reconsider our organizational policies, while systemically advocating for public policies that reflect the true needs and priorities of a country in crisis. We will never reach our goals of full physical, mental, and emotional health until we actually address social injustice and racism in our communities at every level.

Our board, staff, and network of clinics are stronger because of our diversity and the community health center commitment to every person. We pledge to speak up in the name of health equity for ALL Oregonians, uplift patient voices, and to eliminate racism through social justice.

Community health centers were created for, and by, the communities they serve. We stand united to listen, learn, grow, and act.