

Statement from Michigan Community Action about the Social Justice Roots of Our Movement and Anti-Racism

(Okemos, MI, June 3, 2020) The Community Action movement was formed in the crucible of the Civil Rights era of the 1960s to fight poverty at the local level. Our movement is part of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., President Lyndon B. Johnson, and countless community activists who envisioned an empowered, community-centered way to fight poverty and cultivate economic opportunity.

The struggles of our nation and our world today to cope with the legacies of systemic racism and the violence of economic and social inequality are increased by the COVID-19 crisis.

Members of our anti-poverty movement are on the frontlines of our communities in our war against poverty. We've witnessed first-hand the result of disinvestment in education, affordable housing, lack of access to healthcare, and the explosive growth of mass incarceration. We've witnessed how disinvestment in human beings harms the resilience of our communities, families, and individuals, and especially harms those who are vulnerable to systemic racism.

Despite our efforts and the efforts our partners in non-profits, government, and business, the gaps in our social safety net continue to widen. Life expectancies are decreased and upward social mobility is further and further out of reach for poor children, and especially black and brown children born in poverty.

Racism impoverishes us all. It breaks the bonds of the social contract, and crushes our potential to truly thrive and make our communities places of opportunity and peace.

There can be no peace without accountability and reconciliation. It is not enough to condemn racism, we must be actively anti-racist and ready to do the work as advocates and leaders. We stand with our partners: community leaders and activists, elected officials, and non-profit leaders and foundations who are ready to roll up their sleeves to enact reforms that will help our communities, families and individuals to heal from the trauma of racism and inequality.

About Michigan Community Action:

Michigan Community Action is the state association for the 28 designated Community Action Agencies in Michigan. We are part of a national network of over 1,000 local organizations that help people move from poverty to economic stability and self-sufficiency. Our mission is to strengthen and inspire Community Action Agencies to champion solutions to poverty and to promote economic opportunity and stability for all. Our network is united by the promise of Community Action, which changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

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