



THE CT REENTRY COLLABORATIVE

Statement on Racial Justice

June 19, 2020

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This happened as fellow officers witnessed, without intervention, Floyd's distress and struggles while crying out that he could not breathe. Floyd's autopsy reported *homicide* as the cause of his death – a death caused by and while in custody of police. We are outraged, pained and saddened by this glaring act of injustice and oppression and are joining together with all those speaking out against the blatant underlying racism that exists in our country, especially within our criminal justice system.

Floyd's death is among the many other recent incidents that serve as a stark reminder that America is plagued by systemic racism. America's history is laced with images of police brutality towards people of color. So prevalent is this pattern that this is not even the first time during this pandemic we have had to bear witness to a person of color's loss of life at the hands of law enforcement. Just in March, Breonna Taylor, a front-line EMT helping our fellow Americans during COVID-19, was killed by 8 gunshots after police entered her Louisville home, while she slept, in search of a suspect who was already in police custody.

But we know that this is not just about policing. Since the abolishment of slavery and societal shift from Jim Crow toward mass incarceration, racial bias has been a driving force for the *entire* criminal justice system in our country. As a result, our fellow Americans do not feel safe, cared for, supported, or heard, simply because of the color of their skin. For centuries Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the United States have faced an insidious litany of barriers to true justice because of the systemic racism that for far too long has resisted remedy – either through outright denial or endless delay.

We must act urgently and boldly to confront our past and repair systemic injustices in support of those most impacted and for the benefit of all society.

In the coming days, weeks and months, the Collaborative will strongly advocate for:

- A true **Justice Reinvestment Initiative** – Savings extracted or saved from safe, measurable reform of the entire state justice system needs to be reinvested in the communities most impacted.
- A justice system that **prioritizes the humanity and dignity of all persons**, based on international standards of excellence (i.e. Norway, Germany, etc.) - The punishment is the loss of freedom itself. All other rights are protected as individuals prepare to reenter society as "good neighbors".
- An **end to unnecessary obstacles and barriers created by criminal conviction** through the support and implementation of legislative recommendations identified by Connecticut General Assembly's [Council On The Collateral Consequences Of A Criminal Record](#).
- Engaging in **honest, open conversations** centered around racial injustice.
- A Department of Correction **Commissioner that values the above** and is willing to work in partnership with the Reentry Collaborative to **advance state reentry reform**.