Statement on Racism

The Texas Association of City and County Health Officials (TACCHO) has followed the disturbing events of the past few months and experienced it in our own local communities. As the membership organization representing local public health departments in Texas, TACCHO strongly condemns the racist violence that took the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Javier Amir Rodriguez, Arturo Benavides, Tony McDade, Vincent Jen Chin, and so many others. Systemic racism with the threat and reality of violence against black people has been and continues to be a reality in this country and TACCHO stands unequivocally in support of black lives. Thus, TACCHO calls on everyone at the local, state and national level to never forget the names of those lost to this legacy of injustice and stand up against the brutality against black people.

TACCHO’s vision is “Healthy Communities”. Our mission is to “Strengthen and improve local public health practice in Texas through Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Development - LEAD.

TACCHO’s values include:

- Competency
- Consistency
- Health Equity
- Honesty
- Insight and Innovation
- Respect
- Quality

These events coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, violence and the recurring visual trauma have once again revealed a host of racial inequities that has directly and indirectly impacted the health and well-being of minority communities. The ongoing pandemic we are continually facing is racism, violence, trauma, all rooted in systemic inequities. These are all public health concerns and deserve our constant attention.

Racism is a public health issue and local health departments should play a lead role in efforts to address it. Violence or the threat of violence—driven by on-going, systematic racism—creates a toxic stress that impacts the health of children, families, and communities.

We must come together to address the underlying systems of injustice that impact the health of individuals in our community. The community’s health and well-being remain our top priority.

Local health departments have the authority to use data to highlight the impact of police violence and the legacy that drives it. They have the ability to create a bridge to communities of color and provide support for a truth and reconciliation process to begin the long, slow road to healing. They have the ability to work with law enforcement to create a change in culture so desperately needed. We are committed to building their capacity to do this work. As we are all called to grapple with the reality of America’s oppressive history.
In pursuit of a more just and equitable future for all people, TACCHO and its members support the LEAD priorities and values to:

- **Leadership** – serve as, supporting or creating **quality** leaders in efforts to build ties between local government and communities focusing on **health equity** to achieve community centered solutions, as well as, holding police accountable for discriminatory actions and discriminatory use of force.

- **Education** – provide **honest** information on how the anticipation and long-term effects of violence and daily intimidation increase toxic stress that severely harms health of families and whole communities, as well as, releasing clear and accurate data on policing including arrests, use of force, and decertification of law enforcement.

- **Advocacy** – ensure that **respect, competency and consistency** is included in current or new policies and programs that will eliminate discriminatory policing practices, such as racial profiling and stop-and-frisk, which disproportionately target communities of color, as well as changing laws that lead to confrontation and arrests for minor infractions, eliminating the criminalization of inconsequential or victimless behavior.

- **Development** – use **insight and innovation** in the creation or changing of policies and programs that eliminates health inequities, as well as, continuing research on the impact of police violence on all communities of color.

TACCHO supports those engaged in protests across the country who are exercising their right to speak out against injustice, a right vital to the founding of this nation. We recognize that at their core, these protests are driven by centuries of injustice. We also suggest ways to do so with respect and concern for others:

- **Constructively use your voice to share the struggles and propose solutions in relation to the systemic injustices and racism that have burdened communities of color for centuries and the immediate need for change.**

- **Peacefully in terms of channeling your trauma towards leading efforts that catalyze meaningful change, such as getting your neighbors out to vote.**

- **Mindfully remember that the COVID–19 pandemic is still an ongoing public health crisis which continues to affect all individuals, especially black and brown communities.**

- **Take steps to protect yourself and those around you by wearing face coverings, practicing social distancing and washing your hands frequently.**

- **Vote in local, state and national elections for persons and policies that support solutions to systemic injustices and racism.**

- **Complete the US Census 2020 survey, which determines congressional representation from the state, informs hundreds of billions in federal funding to the state every year, and provides data that will impact communities for the next decade.**

Local health departments must support communities of color experiencing this violence in expressing their voice and building power to act on the unjust processes and decisions that lead to permanent stress, deprivation, poor living conditions, and chronic health and mental health conditions.

More importantly, TACCHO calls on ourselves, our members, our partners, and people at the local, state and nation to not only acknowledge but **confront** the racial and economic oppression that has culminated in the
unrest we see today. Local health departments should work to change the public narrative from focusing on individual incidents and occurrences to discussing and addressing the legacy of racial, economic, and social oppression and injustices faced by communities of color.

As local health departments have done in the past with other crises and emergencies that have affected our communities, through solidarity and working together, we will get through these difficult times. Remember, you, your voice, and your health matter.

TACCHO is the member organization for local health departments in Texas. TACCHO serves as the voice for local public health through Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Development (LEAD)
(TACCHO acknowledges the National Association of County and City Health Officials, Harris County Public Health and TACCHO members in the development of this statement.)