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# Black Lives Matter

A statement of solidarity from the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats

The Texas Coalition of Black Democrats stands in solidarity with our allies and constituents across the nation as we address the issues of structural racism and socioeconomic disenfranchisement within our criminal justice system and educational institutions. The prevalent presence of racism and prejudice has been detrimental to the social framework of this country. Structural racism and socioeconomic disenfranchisement are multifaceted social constructs that impacts our lives in every aspect imaginable.

## **Incarceration and Education**

African Americans in Texas are five times more likely to be incarcerated than their Caucasian counterparts. To put that into perspective; African Americans make up only 12% of the state's general population, but nearly 37% of the state's prison and jail population. National statistics in regards to race and incarceration rates are nearly identical to Texas'. Statistics as such are everlasting reminders of injustice and inequality within the nation's criminal justice system. Disproportionately high incarceration rates not only pilot high unemployment rates; they also lead to minority voter disenfranchisement within our communities as well.

Racial disparities are also seen in the public school system. A 2012 survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Civil Rights collected data from American school districts, representing 49 million students. The survey concluded that 16% of African American students were suspended annually, compared to 5% of white students. African American students are suspended at three times the rate of their Caucasian peers.

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Statistics also concluded, 7% of African American students attend schools where as many as 20% of the teachers do not meet licensure and certification requirements.

The withering similarities of injustice within our criminal justice and public school system are both disenchanting and caustic to the sanctity of equality.

### **Police Brutality and Accountability**

The growing concern of police brutality and excessive force against the African American community has been the catalyst for sparking critical dialogue and controversial forums of debate in regards to race relations. Social movements like “Black Lives Matter” have been instrumental in shattering the narrative of a “post-racial America”. A recent study conducted by *The Guardian* concluded in 2015 alone, 102 unarmed African Americans have been killed by law enforcement officers. 32% of African Americans killed by law enforcement were unarmed, as where 25% of Hispanic/Latino people, compare with 15% of unarmed Caucasian people killed.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been radical from its inception, but precocious in encompassing civic leadership, community engagement, the utilization of social media and grassroots activism to convey their message to the masses. “Black Lives Matter” is a sociopolitical movement that affirms the lives of the marginalized and disadvantaged.

The movement calls for transparency, police reform, humanity, accountability, access to resources and most importantly, the preservation of fundamental and civil rights. An unapologetic call to action that often times blurs the lines of political correctness and controversy. It has also been a driving force in bridging the gap between activism and politics. The phrase “Black Lives Matter” is more than a rhetorical rallying cry; it is a united stance against injustice.

The Texas Coalition of Black Democrats supports the comprehensive efforts of the Black Lives Matter movement, elected officials and organizations alike who have worked diligently in ensuring impartiality and equal protection of fundamental and civil rights under the law. The

Texas Coalition of Black Democrats will continue to support and propose passages of legislation in education and criminal justice reforms.