



June 3, 2020

An Open Letter from the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber and the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County

In response to the gruesome death of George Floyd, we join all local, regional, and national leaders in condemning this unjust taking of a life.

This tragedy was not an isolated incident, and the reaction to it exposes, once again, the systemic injustices inflicting people of color every single day in the United States and around the world.

Right here at home we have the recent tragic death of Manuel Ellis who died while being arrested. While we await the results of the investigation into his death, we must not wait to do whatever is necessary to eliminate systemic racism.

The question is, what are we going to do about it?

As the CEO's of the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County, we state unequivocally racism is a public health crisis, an economic crisis, and a political crisis. Just as our communities have rallied to address the COVID-19 crisis, we need to rally to address the crisis of racism.

The first step in addressing a crisis is acknowledging it for what it is. Racism is a scourge on our society, and indifference to it is not an option. As business leaders, we want EVERYONE in our communities to enjoy basic human rights, a level playing field, and fairness in pursuit of their dreams, whether that is in business, the arts, or public service.

First steps, however, are not enough. There needs to be follow through. Our community needs to know its business leaders are fighting for their world to be more just and safe. We do not claim to have the answers, but we have the will to engage with our fellow leaders and fellow citizens to find them.

We join with Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards in stating that "we are a community with heart. We are Compassionate Tacoma, and together we can drive catalytic change."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom".

Tom Pierson
President & CEO
Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce W. Kendall".

Bruce Kendall
President & CEO
Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County