

Dear Fellow Oaklanders,

Oscar Grant, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor were already [three times more likely](#) to be killed by police than a White person when they were born Black in America. Right here in our city, Black Oaklanders in 2017 were [24 times more likely](#) to experience use of force by the police. [Seven times more likely](#) to be unsheltered and [earned just a third](#) of what a White household did in 2017.

What began as a movement against police brutality has evolved into a long-overdue national conversation about the racial disparities and systemic oppression that permeate the American experience. That conversation must now turn toward action.

Over the past few weeks our staff and leadership have reflected on this national conversation as a whole, while simultaneously looking at the Metro Chamber's role in Oakland with fresh eyes. Our mission has always been to support Oakland's diverse and powerful business community by advocating for innovative policies, programs and ideas that will lift up our local workforce. This is where we will apply the current national conversation to what we do. We know this goal is only a part of a much larger action – but it's also where we can make the most impactful, enduring change.

The business and nonprofit leaders that make up the Chamber's 1,000+ members come from an array of backgrounds and perspectives but share a common dedication to Oakland. The Metro Chamber is fortunate to have developed and maintained deep partnerships with Oakland's multicultural Chamber community in collaborations with the African American, Chinatown, Latino, and Vietnamese Chambers of Commerce. Several weeks ago Oakland's business community came together to call for [justice for George Floyd and an end to systemic oppression](#) – an action of solidarity and unity that is indicative of Oakland's passion for justice. We know our members care deeply about creating a more equitable community for Oaklanders of color. It's our task to help them realize that goal.

An initial set of actions have emerged as short-term steps toward embedding a long-term equity lens in the Chamber's work to create good jobs, support entrepreneurs and grow businesses. These early steps include convening meetings on racial and economic justice, working with our members about how the Chamber can play a role in their work addressing racism and injustice, race and equity trainings for our leadership and staff, providing resources for our members on embedding equity in their workplace, and expanding our advocacy for policies that promote workforce development and economic and housing opportunity.

This conversation is just the beginning. We welcome and invite feedback, direction, and questions.

Sincerely,

Zack Wasserman, Chair, Board of Directors; Partner, Wendel Rosen LLP

Ken Maxey, Chair, OakPAC Board of Directors; Government Relations Director, Comcast

Barbara Leslie, President & CEO, Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce