



June 3, 2020

TwinWest & Mpls Regional Chambers George Floyd Statement

Over the past several days, the world has seen both the worst and the best of Minneapolis-St. Paul. It is incomprehensible that George Floyd, an African American man, a member of our community, a beloved employee of a small business in Minneapolis, a father, and a friend to many, was killed while handcuffed and pleading for his life. The lack of respect for human dignity from someone charged with upholding the law is disgusting and devastating. Our state and country are clearly not where we need to be, not when violence is inflicted by those trained to deescalate it.

Our community has also rallied to support and care for one another. This generosity and loving spirit have been evident even in these difficult days. As one example among many, Touchstone Mental Health requested food donations for Minnehaha Commons residents on Lake Street. So many people dropped off food that they became a distribution center for the entire neighborhood.

We are a region that strives to bring prosperity to all. There is no doubt we must do better. Jointly, the Minneapolis Regional Chamber and TwinWest Chamber acknowledge that unconscious bias and prejudices help to create structural impediments to systemic change. Furthermore, we pledge to build on our work supporting economic growth across the Twin Cities. We will lead with civility, justice, and an intentional approach to delivering systemic change.

Here are some of the ways the chambers are increasing our efforts to serve our community:

1. Support the family and legacy of George Floyd. When justice is denied, and longstanding inequities continue unanswered, our community cannot succeed. We must face the realities of disparities in our community and tackle them head on. Our two chambers are united in confronting the systemic racism that created the conditions that allowed George Floyd to tragically die.
2. Strengthen our commitment to be the most inclusive and diverse Chamber of Commerce in the nation. Our partnerships with the Latino Chamber of Commerce of Minnesota and the Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce are long-standing commitments. We will build our organization with intentionality to reflect the businesses in our community.
3. Lead efforts to rebuild, protect, and grow small businesses. Our region's small businesses, many of them minority and immigrant-owned, bring vibrancy, creativity, and life to Minneapolis-St. Paul. They provide jobs to tens of thousands of people. Many are hurting right now, harmed by the economic fallout of the global pandemic and the unrest in our cities. We will marshal our resources to help businesses come back strong.

4. We will partner with the Lake Street Council, the West Broadway Business & Area Coalition, the Stairstep Foundation/His Works United, the African American Community Response Team, and others to support communities that have been hit hardest.
5. In our advocacy work we will continue to support elected officials and staff in the development of supportive policies and practices, including police and criminal justice reforms, while also holding them accountable to learning from missteps when they fall short of expectations.

The members and leadership of the Minneapolis Regional and the TwinWest Chambers recognize the key role the business community must play in bringing about sustained change. We invite you to join us.