

June 23, 2020

**A Statement on Race and Equity
From the St. Joseph Circuit, Superior, and Probate Courts**

On June 5, 2020, Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush issued the “Statement on Race and Equity”. Her statement requires that all courts ensure equal justice to persons of color in matters across the legal system. It is a recognition that we, as the judiciary, can and must do better. It is a call to action.

This Statement is the response of the state courts serving St. Joseph County to the mandate set forth by the Chief Justice. It is our call to action. It is our pledge to stand with the Chief Justice and commit to doing better, and improving justice to persons of color.

We strive for fairness. We will not be complicit in perpetuating the bias and inequity that are carved in our nation’s history. We hear the voices that cry out in our streets and towns.

- We will train ourselves on implicit bias and educate ourselves about racial disparities in the judicial system. We encourage all attorneys and others in the judicial system, including law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, probation, and other local agencies (hereafter, “stakeholders”) to do the same.
- We will promote a collaborative model of justice, consistent with the Chief Justice’s aim of fostering legitimacy among those who might feel shut out; informing and reforming those who might otherwise abuse power; and promoting real, tangible conversations about our community’s most pressing needs and issues. We will promote tangible discussions and forums for our community to address pressing needs and issues.
- Our courts will be a place that victims of biased hatred and racism can rely on. We will treat these victims with dignity and encourage stakeholders to do the same.
- We are a part of a system of laws that hold those who stoke the fires of hate and racism accountable and we will discharge our obligation without fear of retribution.
- We will improve the pathway for more people of color to become lawyers, judges, and in leading positions with our stakeholders. We recognize that when citizens see themselves, their experiences, and their backgrounds in lawyers and judges, the public gains trust and understanding.
- We will show fairness and compassion to families affected by poverty, and we will protect the disadvantaged and vulnerable, no matter their color.

- We recognize children in the court system must have access to justice and receive fair treatment. Although children of color may have received more punishment and harsher treatment than their white counterparts, we are committed to make sure disparate treatment does not happen.

In our quest to achieve these goals, we encourage our stakeholders to make similar commitments.

SIGNED BY:

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