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## Position Statement on Racism and Inequity

*“Nursing encompasses the protection, promotion and restoration of health and well-being; the prevention of illness and injury; and the alleviation of suffering, in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations.” (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015)*

The Delaware Nurses Association condemns racism and the deeply rooted inequities within current systems across the United States and the world. As stated by the American Academy of Nursing, “Violence, discrimination and racism have a direct impact on determinants of health, exacerbate health inequities and can lead to long-term trauma” (American Academy of Nursing [AAN], 2020). The Delaware Nurses Association stands with our national associations and advocates for social equity to say enough is enough.

We must honor the senseless deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, among so many others, by changing the course of our beloved country forever. The American Nurses Association *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* states that, “The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth and unique attributes of every person” (ANA, 2015). These are not just words in a book.

This is further elaborated to say, “Nurses consider the needs and respect the values of each person in every professional relationship and setting; they provide leadership in the development and implementation of changes in public and health policies that support this duty” (ANA, 2015).

The Delaware Nurses Association is committed to living our Code of Ethics by using our expertise, compassion, collective voice and partnerships to design, advocate for and enact changes that create better systems of care, free from racism and unconscious bias. We serve all Delawareans across the state in the pursuit of healthy individuals and communities.

The World Health Organization bestowed upon the global nursing and midwifery community an entire year dedicated to honoring our profession and educating the world

about nursing. They have done this for many reasons including to recognize the significant contributions that nurses around the world make on the health and well-being of their communities. We must use this year to educate our legislators, policy makers, leaders and communities about our profession. We must also use this year as a force for good – as already demonstrated by nurses on the frontlines and in leadership positions during a global pandemic. Now we have another calling, to amplify our voices and the voices of advocates for social reform in the name of equity for all.

The American Academy of Nursing statement sums up our next steps perfectly, “We must not only work to eliminate systemic and institutional racism, personal racism and unconscious bias, but we must also work to increase the diversity within our own profession and not succumb to the institutional structures and processes that can block openness and prevent change” (AAN, 2020).

### **Senate Bill No. 191**

In response to demand for reform, the Delaware Legislative Black Caucus announced a package of racial justice legislation, known as [The Justice for All Agenda](#), on June 10, 2020. The first piece of critical legislative change will be the passage of [Senate Bill 191](#). Senate Bill 191 seeks to amend the Delaware Constitution explicitly making protection against discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin a fundamental right. Senate Bill 191 has been approved by both the Delaware House of Representatives (June 25) and Senate (June 16) and is currently awaiting the Governor’s action.

The DNA, without hesitation, supports this amendment to Delaware’s Constitution. We discussed the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in this Delaware constitutional change with the bills’ primary sponsor State Senator Darius Brown and co-sponsor Delaware Representative Melissa Minor-Brown, MSN, RN. This is aligned with DNA’s position that all humans shall be treated equitably. The legislative amendment that will add discriminatory protections based on race, color and national origin is so important that the DNA shines a spotlight on this topic. We will continue conversations and have direct support from Representative Melissa Minor-Brown, regarding future amendments that will include sexual orientation and gender identity. The DNA commends the Delaware Legislative Black Caucus for bringing forth the Justice for All Agenda and offers our partnership in continued efforts.

We cannot do it alone though; we need your active partnership to be successful. If you have ideas that you want to share or want to get involved with the DNA, we implore you to email us at [contactdna@denurses.org](mailto:contactdna@denurses.org). We will listen and facilitate collaborative partnerships that result in improved outcomes for everyone in our care.

## References

American Nurses Association (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements*. Silver Spring, MD: Nursesbooks.org Retrieved from <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/ethics/code-of-ethics-for-nurses/coe-view-only/>

Sullivan-Marx, E. (2020, June). *Racism affects health and wellness and it must be addressed*. American Academy of Nursing. <https://www.aannet.org/news/press-releases/position-statement-on-racism>