



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Joint Statement of Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS) and the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP) in Response to the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network's [Call to Action](#)**

June 3, 2020

RHLS and PULP are appalled at the insidious violence perpetrated by our justice system against Black communities, and the persistent and shameful acts of overt and covert racism rooted deep in our institutions. In no uncertain terms, we condemn the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by the police, the murder of Ahmaud Arbery by private citizens in the name of law and order, and the long wake of state-sanctioned violence against members of the Black community.

As legal services programs, focused on addressing systemic injustice in housing, energy, water, and other utility services, RHLS and PULP recognize that many of the formal systems and the informal beliefs that define the rules of the game for access to housing and utilities are racist, and we affirm that we will never achieve our common mission for economic justice if we are not equally vigilant in our collective mission to achieve racial justice.

In response to the [Call to Action](#) issued by the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, we commit to taking the following immediate actions to more directly and concretely center our work on racial justice priorities:

- We will be more deliberate in our commitment to listen to and learn from the experience and perspectives of Black and brown communities by increasing our outreach and engagement with communities of color, strengthening our existing partnership with anti-racist organizations, supporting the growth and development of our client groups, and building new partnerships with organizations that are leading the way in anti-racist advocacy.
- We will demand transparency in housing and utility programs so the public can see how resources are being spent, identify and fight against policies that are (intentionally or

unintentionally) racist, and hold racist individuals, institutions, and entities accountable for both their actions and their inactions.

- We will devote resources to conducting a careful assessment of our own internal programs, policies, and practices and will develop a racial justice action plan to align our programs and policies more intentionally with our commitment to operate anti-racist legal services programs.
- We will hold ourselves accountable for making measurable progress on our commitments by publicly releasing our racial justice action plan and regularly reporting on our implementation of that plan.

RHLS and PULP commit to the communities we serve: We will walk with you. We will fight alongside you. And we will work tirelessly to dismantle the forces that perpetuate racism in all of its vile forms.

**For more information or comment, please contact:**

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