Founded in 1884, the Columbus Chamber (“Chamber”) is the leading voice of business within the 11-county Columbus Region (Franklin, Delaware, Union, Fairfield, Licking, Knox, Logan, Madison, Morrow, Marion, Pickaway), representing more than 2,000 members employing over 500,000 workers across all industry sectors. While most of our large corporate anchors are investors in our Chamber, more than 80 percent of our members have less than 100 employees, and it is through the lens of the small business owner that we not only review and advocate on policymaking, but also plan and carry out the entirety of our work.

The business community stands firmly in support of Resolution 0095X-2020 to declare racism a public health crisis in the City of Columbus, and to recommit the City’s full attention to improving the quality of life and health of minority residents.

Small businesses have seen collateral damage during the displays of anger and frustration that have taken place in our city and across the country over the last few days. While many business owners have experienced property damage, the sentiment of most can be summed up by a retail owner located in the Short North: “Windows can be replaced, but lives can’t.” The criminal acts of a few individuals should be condemned, and should not distract from the peaceful protests of many.

We recognize that institutional racism has led to disparities and inequalities throughout our community and our country. These disparities not only impact the current and future workforce, but also the overall wellbeing and future prosperity of our City and its residents. Like our elected leaders, business leaders want to ensure that the people of our city, especially the black community and those directly impacted by racial injustice, feel heard and that there is hope for change. Employers are committed to creating change within their organizations through diversity and inclusion initiatives, volunteerism, foundational giving, and more. And as Council makes a commitment today to honestly and directly address minority health inequities, please know that you have a partner in your Columbus Chamber and our members in bringing about systemic change across our community.

The Columbus Chamber has long been a champion for workplace diversity and inclusion. Research unequivocally shows the benefits to both business and society of increased diversity in the workplace, on boards and in leadership positions, and in entrepreneurship. The mission of the Columbus Chamber Foundation is to improve the economic wellbeing of underserved individuals through enhanced access to workforce development and employment opportunities. We have successfully worked to better integrate into the workforce the City’s immigrant population, improve access to jobs for formerly incarcerated individuals, and highlight the benefits of hiring people with varying disabilities. Education, employment and training are proven means to achieving upward social mobility and creating a more level playing field for minority populations, therefore making our Chamber and Foundation incredibly important partners in this endeavor.
Alongside City Council’s recommitment to this issue, the Columbus Chamber today pledges to take an intentional look at the work of our Foundation to more effectively address the economic needs of the region’s minority population and help them overcome racial barriers to employment and social mobility.

Thank you for advancing Resolution 0095X-2020 today to reemphasize the need for greater action both in the public and private sectors to achieve racial justice and equality. The Columbus Chamber stands ready to work with you.