BENWOOD’S STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE

Like many of you, we have been witness to recent unjust and racially motivated deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery – and so many more. This is a reflection of the systemic racism across so many other sectors of our society, including housing, health, education, media and employment. These disparities not only highlight the racial injustice across our country, but they also hold a mirror up to the reality within Chattanooga.

As we cry out over the injustices today, we know that we must seize this moment to push for real change. We cannot let our community go back to the old “normal” – a normal where talent is equally distributed across Chattanooga, but opportunity is not; a normal where growth and progress in our community does not lead to real opportunity for Chattanoogans with black or brown skin; a normal where a growing percentage of our population is being left behind, excluded from the jobs, education and other opportunities necessary to move up the economic ladder and contribute to our community's prosperity.
As a philanthropic organization, we know we have had a role in maintaining the “normal” of the past — and that we have a role in actively supporting systemic change in the future. Our opportunity today is to listen to voices that are often ignored, to learn how we can be better members of a more equitably shared community and economy, to commit to becoming stronger advocates for meaningful change, and to then work together to bring about a better day. A day where opportunity is shared, where Black and Brown lives matter, and where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. A day where racial justice is more than a chant, and economic dignity creates new hope and possibility. We believe that Chattanooga’s prosperity must be shared, and that all residents must be invited and encouraged to fully contribute to and benefit from our community’s growth.