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Washtenaw Superintendents' Association Anti-Racist Commitment Statement

Washtenaw County, Mich. – After the recent occurrence of overtly racist incidents in Washtenaw County garnering national attention, the Washtenaw Superintendents' Association (WSA) has issued a statement condemning these acts of racism and solidifying their commitment to anti-racism within all local public schools. WSA represents the superintendents of the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and the nine public school districts in Washtenaw County: Ann Arbor Public Schools, Chelsea Schools, Dexter Community Schools, Lincoln Consolidated Schools, Manchester Community Schools, Milan Area Schools, Saline Area Schools, Whitmore Lake Public Schools and Ypsilanti Community Schools. Their statement reads:

“As leaders of the nine traditional school districts and the Washtenaw ISD, we are compelled to speak out in response to recent events that have called attention to racist attitudes and actions within our schools and the larger community in Washtenaw County.

The stories of students at Saline High School have surfaced in the media recently, but microaggressions and more overt aggression happens in every district. Now is not the time to point fingers at one district or one community, but rather to reflect on the ways in which each of us, individually and collectively, contribute to an environment where racial insults, bullying, and harassment are permitted to take place or are even seen by some as acceptable. It has been said that “what you permit, you promote.” Silence in the face of racism and racist actions is complicity and therefore we will not remain silent.

As leaders of the public education system in Washtenaw County, we are committed to nurturing anti-racist educational learning environments where each and every child is respected and valued for who they are regardless of skin color, gender, sexual identity or orientation, ability or disability, or any other category. Our diversity is what makes us stronger, and we will not accept educational environments where students are subject to conditions where their identity makes them a target of abuse.

All of our students will be asked to be competitive workers in a society that assumes an ability to work in a multicultural world. For many, the ability to understand difference is developed through their educational experience.

How we treat each other is a measure of our shared values and commitment to basic human dignity and worth. As superintendents in Washtenaw County, we commit to anti-racist leadership and fostering inclusive educational environments where each person, students and staff, feels a sense of belonging and is treated with dignity and respect.”

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