



IGNITE

EMPOWER

From all of us at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Washtenaw County, we sincerely hope that you and your families are safe and healthy. The last several months have been incredibly difficult for many in our community and we are grateful that we have been able to provide some support. We hope that as matches start to get together again that your friendships are a source of comfort.

The days have gotten longer and heavier over the last week. There are no perfect words to capture grief and anger, but there are simple ones we must use as our guide: Be there for and with each other and our young people. The recent murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd — and far too many others whose names we may not know — are urgent reminders that the tragedies and realities of racism, violence, and injustice for Black people and communities of color are not new or isolated. They are systemic and impact those in our community every day.

At Big Brothers Big Sisters, we believe in the limitless potential of every young person. But we know that the racial inequality that exists in our systems of government, education, economics and the justice system can harm that potential. It puts too heavy a weight on kids. It's our job, as the adults, to help remove the barriers and support the dreams of our Littles. We are committed to partnering with you in addressing the systemic challenges and inequities in our community, continuing the work of reviewing our own policies and procedures, and supporting the opportunities and experiences that allow young people to learn and grow.

We commit to using our values to lead us forward together in the fight for justice:

- **Relationships**- We commit to revolving our work around the relationships that we create with the youth in our program, their families and mentors. We commit to partner with our board, community and other agencies to advocate and work towards justice for all.
- **Safety**- We commit to keeping the mental and physical safety of our youth, their families and mentors a top priority. We cannot ignore the appalling threats against people of color and will continue to strive for a community where all feel safe.
- **Diversity**- We commit to celebrating the rich diversity found in our community and respecting the dignity and worth of everyone. We will work with others in the community to expose and eradicate forms of oppression that threaten the potential of our youth.
- **Results**- We commit to work with experts in our community in order to provide the best service available to the young people in our program. We will strive to support all youth in our program achieving success by listening to what supports they need and ask for.
- **The Team**- We commit to fostering a safe and healthy team environment. We take responsibility for our personal and professional growth so that we as a team we can work together successfully to support the youth in our program.

Although there is much work to be done, our staff is looking forward to working with you in protecting our youth. It can be difficult as a parent or mentor to always have the right words. Frankly, sometimes there are no right words to express our hurt and anger with the state of the world, while also letting the youth know there is hope. We do our best. We learn together and we keep trying to do better.

We encourage you as parents, guardians and Bigs to talk about how the state of the world is impacting you and the youth that we serve. How are you/they doing? Do you/they need to talk? How can we support each other process what is going on? Reach out to each other. Reach out to us. We are listening.

In solidarity,  
Your BBBS Staff



Big Brothers Big Sisters.  
OF WASHTENAW COUNTY



DEFEND



POTENTIAL