



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Monday, August 28, 2017

**CONTACT:** Wenona Wolf, Communication and Development Manager

wwolf@kidsforward.net, 608-284-0580 x 304

## **Learn, Stand Up, Speak Up, Advocate, and Come Together**

### **Kids Forward's Response to Hatred**

MADISON, WI – The following is a statement from Kids Forward condemning the racist acts that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia and calling for everyone to play a bigger role in addressing the nation's ongoing racial injustices by speaking up and holding leaders and systems accountable.

“As an organization committed to standing up for every child, every family, and every community, Kids Forward strongly condemns the hate, violence, and acts of racism ignited by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia. Like you, we are horrified about what occurred and we are equally horrified by the response, or the lack of response, from many of our nation's leaders.

The removal of symbols, monuments, and memorials that condone and glorify slavery, racism, and acts of genocide is far overdue in this country. We fully support the removal of such monuments, and we believe that related historical markers must be contextualized in a way that reveals their connection to racial oppression and white supremacy. In addition, the history lessons taught in our schools must do a better job of accurately teaching our children about our nation's long-standing history of systematically oppressing and discriminating against communities of color.

In addition to removing symbols of past racism, we must also act on the urgent need to confront the consequences of today's racism. President Trump's failure to condemn the racists who incited violence in Charlottesville is not only indefensible in itself, but is part of a dangerous pattern that enables and advances racist sentiments and policies—threatening both our nation's values and our future. The abundance of hateful speech heard throughout our country today, particularly from our leaders, combined with assaults on voting rights, affirmative action, religion, equitable immigration policies, LGBTQ rights, policing and criminal justice reforms, equitable access to health care and education, and other related policies, is putting our nation in crisis.

We must redouble efforts to hold the leaders who are fostering this crisis accountable. Those leaders go beyond the President and his closest allies—they include all those who have defended, trivialized, rationalized, or ignored what is being done to deepen racial divides and racial injustices. It is all of us who have knowingly or unknowingly created a space for racism to live and thrive.

And while we are holding our leaders accountable, we must also hold the systems that perpetuate racial and ethnic inequities in our communities, our state, and our nation accountable as well. This is especially important in Wisconsin, where historic, systemic, and institutionalized racism and white

privilege have come together to produce some of the most extreme racial disparities between the white population and communities of color. Closing these racial and ethnic equity gaps is the most important and urgent challenge facing our communities and our state. None of us can sit this out or wait for others to act—it is the responsibility of each of us and it is a challenge we must all take on and overcome.

As an advocacy organization working on behalf of every child and every family in the state, we ask you to join us in playing an active role in overcoming hate and racism. **Learn** about the complex history of our country and the racism that is rooted in so many of our policies and practices and have conversations with your family, friends, and colleagues about it. **Stand up** and hold leaders, accountable for their actions or lack of action to address racial and ethnic inequity. **Speak up** for justice and challenge the systems you are part of—whether it’s your work place, your child’s school, or your local government. **Advocate** for policies that will make our communities more equitable and vocally oppose those that will harm communities of color. Lastly, **come together**, and commit yourself to making our state a place where every child and family can thrive—especially children and families of color.

There are many ways to involve yourself, and there are many great organizations across our state and throughout our country that you can work with to dismantle the many pieces of racism that exist – whether it’s addressing hate, training people on racial justice, advancing public policies that promote equity, ensuring every adult has the right to vote or protecting communities of color from environmental racism—just to name a few. So get involved. Learn, stand up, speak up, advocate, and come together to make our communities, our state, and our nation places where racism is no longer tolerated.”

###

*Kids Forward, formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, advocates for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families in Wisconsin. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every kid, every family, and every community thrive.*