



PUBLIC STATEMENT
Georgia Chamber of Commerce
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Toward A Better Georgia

Statement from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the Atlanta Black Chambers and the Greater Georgia Black Chamber of Commerce

The Georgia Chamber, the Atlanta Black Chambers and the Greater Georgia Black Chamber of Commerce fiercely advocate for quality jobs, free enterprise, economic mobility, and for over a century, we have stood against discrimination.

As a business community, we understand the deep hurt and grave concern for race relations in this country. The most recent acts of violence, as well as those that preceded them, are unacceptable. To distract from the true issue through rioting and violence by small factions with other motives is wrong.

We thank local and state officials for working together to support and protect Georgians rights to protest peacefully throughout our state. Their swift and decisive action allowed peaceful protesters the necessary space to voice concerns, vent frustrations and mitigate potential damage in a difficult and emotional time. Lost to the sensationalism of social media were the unsung citizens who stood up for non-violence; those that joined churches to clean up cities the next morning; and countless prayer groups that called on better angels. Time and again we saw examples of hurt, sacrifice, and grace. Now, we need that grace to have real discussions.

Understanding the barriers of color or condition is difficult and sometimes impossible, but empathy is a starting point. Just because you cannot imagine a problem, does not mean it's not real to others. If we are all truly equal in God's eyes, then what frustrates or enrages our neighbors should frustrate and enrage us as well.

We are different in our race, cultures, backgrounds, upbringings, experiences, life choices and careers by design. When you mix all of that together, we create a vibrant and blended culture that makes Georgia unique and quite special. Georgians value that diversity because it makes us better and creates a place where our children want to live, work, play and pray. But it should not take a video or a protest to spur us to further action. That grace calls on us to address racism and inequality every day.

We stand on the shoulders of giants who, through humility and wisdom, have lifted Georgia to become a community of dialogue, debate, and progress. Our state's economic growth has benefited from the bold engagement and vision of Georgia's business, faith, government, and civil rights leaders when we have listened to employees, customers, congregants, constituents, and the coming generations. We have outgrown and outshone the rest of the South by being a beacon of opportunity for equality and inclusion.

Our Chambers are firmly committed to a better Georgia. We will advocate for the passage of Hate Crimes legislation, but we also understand that this, alone, is not enough. We need the faith community, neighbors, and business leaders to facilitate a broader, deeper discussion because we cannot simply legislate our way out of these 400-year-old problems. This issue deserves conversation and empathy, not clicks and emojis.

We will be part of a dialogue that does not fear honest and sincere discussion about race and equality; one that builds an authentic solid foundation for future generations. We will build a better Georgia that *includes* rather than *excludes* and that continues to anchor Georgia as a premier talent destination open and accepting of all.

Nothing less than genuine equality can be considered success because we must be a state that celebrates diversity while working tirelessly to mitigate disparity.