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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The AUSTIN BLACK LAWYERS ASSOCIATION (ABLA) and the HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION OF AUSTIN (HBAA) stand united in our opposition to racial injustice in Central Texas and around the country. We condemn the killing of George Floyd – a son of Texas – by officers of the Minneapolis Police Department, and support the peaceful protesters around the world demanding justice and an end to the racism perpetuated through law enforcement practices and the criminal justice system across the United States.

The recurrent killings of black and brown persons throughout our country – Mr. Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, to name a few – are emblematic of the systemic oppression and marginalization of minorities, in particular black people, that continue to plague America. Their deaths are not isolated instances. We mourn the unjustified and excessive violence perpetrated against people of color on a national scale and within our local communities. We still grieve the deaths of Michael Ramos, an unarmed man killed by Austin police in April, and Sandra Bland, who died in police custody following a pretextual traffic stop in Waller County. We acknowledge the corrosive role racism plays in our society and stand in solidarity with those demanding change.

This year has been difficult for communities of color. On top of the systemic racism encountered daily, our communities have been disproportionately impacted by the novel coronavirus. Infection and death rates of Blacks and Hispanics are substantially higher as a percentage of the population. These hardships are compounded by the devastating job losses and business closures experienced by our community due to the pandemic. The disproportionate effects of coronavirus on minority communities highlight the economic and social disparities caused by centuries of racism and systemic oppression in all aspects of daily life, including overt and implicit bias, discrimination, segregation, and xenophobia.

Consistent with our mission, we strive to enhance and support our communities by not only acknowledging but also confronting injustice. In this regard, there is much work to be done. It is not enough to sit idle or be silent. The injustices plaguing our society affect us all, and we share a responsibility to develop solutions together. Accordingly, we call on all those who support the ideals enshrined in our Declaration of Independence – “that all men are created equal that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” – to demand that their governments, law enforcement, educational institutions, health care systems, businesses, and all other institutions, examine their laws, policies, and procedures to ensure that America’s ideals are realized. The solutions to the injustices plaguing our country are complex and involve, amongst other things, addressing over-policing in communities of color, over-criminalization, use of force policies, qualified immunity, the militarization of law enforcement, and confronting the irrational fear of minorities.

ABLA and HBAA reaffirm our commitment to share this burden, and hope that our colleagues, especially those who do not identify as persons of color, will join us in these pursuits.