Dear L.A. Compact Partners,

Like so many of you, UNITE-LA staff has spent the past few weeks in deep discussion and reflection with our colleagues and partners on the unjust murder of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer — aided by the actions of three other officers — over the course of an interminable 8 minutes and 46 seconds.

The call for justice for George Floyd has swiftly expanded — to justice for Breonna Taylor, justice for Ahmaud Arbery, and justice for countless others whose lives and livelihoods have been taken by deep-rooted systemic, anti-Black racism. This national outcry has underscored a plain truth: our systems are actively failing communities of color, especially the Black community. We know the impact of this structural racism is not limited to the police and the criminal justice system, but is woven across the very fabric of our society.

This moment has prompted an imperative for UNITE-LA — as the primary convener of the L.A. Compact — to better support our Compact partners and workgroups in collectively meeting this call for racial justice. The L.A. Compact was formed as a powerful platform for regional collaboration to change systems for the benefit of children and youth in Los Angeles, a region comprised primarily of communities of color.

In recent years, many of you — our partners from early childhood, K-12, higher education and social service systems — have pushed the L.A. Compact partnership to focus much more intentionally on issues of equity. While we have long sought to achieve universalistic goals for all students in the L.A. region, Compact partners have called for a more targeted approach that shines a spotlight on inequity and the strategies needed to support the most marginalized and under-served student populations.

In 2018, UNITE-LA supported the L.A. Compact Stewardship Group in developing a set of commitments to advancing equity, including the shared belief that “structural and institutional racism and classism must be dismantled, resources must be allocated and strategies must be targeted in a way that advances equity of opportunity and educational outcomes.”

This moment challenges us to turn this shared belief into collective action. We know that many of you have already been leading this charge within your own institutions and systems. We acknowledge that the Compact has not done enough to create the collaborative space to prioritize this conversation, to critically examine how our systems continue to create and perpetuate structural racism and inequality, or to take effective action together.

The L.A. Compact’s 17 workgroups are a rare space where perspectives from across sectors and trusted relationships among partners are powerful tools for learning and collaboration to drive systems change. We recognize this moment as a critical opportunity for the L.A. Compact to utilize these spaces to redouble our efforts to dismantle systemic, racial inequities.

We must affirm loudly and clearly — in our words and actions — that Black Lives Matter. We invite you, our partners and our community, to join us in a new phase of explicitly anti-racist, systems-level work. We ask you to hold us accountable to our commitment, and as always, we welcome and value your continued partnership.

In Solidarity,
Your UNITE-LA L.A. Compact Team

David Rattray
President & CEO of UNITE-LA

Adam Gottlieb
L.A. Compact Institutions of Higher Education Collaborative, Student Success Workgroup, CSUN Connections, COVID College Connect

AJ Lucas
L.A. Workforce Systems Collaborative and Health Sector Collaborative

Alma Salazar, Ed.D.
L.A. Workforce Systems Collaborative

Ariana Oliva
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, L.A. Compact Stewardship Group

Bridget Netter
Business Education Partnerships, STEAM Initiatives

Carrie Lemmon
L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative Foster Youth at Work, L.A. Unified Community Schools, L.A. Compact Stewardship Group, Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, COVID College Connect
Claudine Battisti  
*Marketing and Communications*

Dinan Guan  
*L.A. Compact Data Workgroup, L.A. Educator Pathways Partnership, and support for Research and Evaluation across workgroups*

Geraldine Contreras-Jaimerena  
*Business Education Partnerships, STEAM Initiatives*

Heddy Nam  
*L.A. Workforce Systems Collaborative, Health Sector Collaborative*

Humberto Estratalan  
*Joint Advocacy Workgroup*

Lisa Catanzarite, Ph.D  
*L.A. Compact Data Workgroup, L.A. Educator Pathways Partnership, L.A. Compact Stewardship Group, and support for Research and Evaluation across workgroups*

Marwa Abdelghani  
*Marketing and Communications*

Sanaz Sazegar  
*L.A. Educator Pathways Partnership, and support for Research and Evaluation across workgroups*

Sonia Campos-Rivera  
*Joint Advocacy Workgroup*