

August 16, 2017

Governor Rick Snyder
State of Michigan
PO Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909



Governor Snyder,

We have read the statement that you released on August 15 and appreciate your affirmation that "[H]ate speech and violence are not welcome in Michigan." However, the current environment is one in which more is demanded. We call upon you specifically to condemn Kalkaska Village President Sieting's recent call for deaths to all Muslims and other minority groups. Failure to do so is equivalent to silence. Your silence implies something is wrong with Muslims and other minority groups, leading to possible internalization of this hate and fanning the flames of hatred already ablaze in our state. As Elie Wiesel once countenanced: "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Our nation, our state, and our many diverse communities are reeling from Saturday's white supremacist marches, Nazi salutes, anti-Semitic chants, violence in Charlottesville, VA, and murder of Heather Heyer. Yesterday a swinging noose was found on a playground in Muskegon. America has over 900 hate groups and some of the members live here in Michigan. Not long ago, middle school students in an Oakland County public school chanted "build the wall" in a crowded lunchroom with Mexican students. Today, the President of the United States defended racist protestors and likened the acts of the white supremacists and Nazis to those who exercised their right to protest as morally reprehensible.

This is a moment that calls upon all of us to exercise moral leadership. More is required from you, the governor of this State. We ask that you condemn those specific remarks and not stand silent in the face of violence and threats to our communities. As Senator Orrin Hatch said: "We should call evil by its name. My brother didn't give his life fighting Hitler for Nazi ideas to go unchallenged here at home." More is required.

Sincerely yours,

Steve Spreitzer, President and CEO, Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion
Heidi Budaj, Regional Director, Michigan Region, Anti-Defamation League
David Kurzmann, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council/AJC
Raman Singh, President, Interfaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit
Bob Bruttell, Chair, Interfaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit
Gail Katz, Co-founder, WISDOM (Women's Interfaith Solutions for Dialogue and Outreach in MetroDetroit)
Yvonne White, President, Michigan State Conference NAACP
Kary L. Moss, Executive Director, ACLU of Michigan

Cc: Harvey Hollins, Director, Michigan Office of Metropolitan and Urban Initiatives
Kristie Kibbey Etue, Director, Michigan State Police