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### **A Statement from Dr. Romules Durant, CEO/Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools**

This week, I have spent my days acknowledging the class of 2020, one by one, during our drive-thru ceremonies. We did this in an effort to ensure that our students understand that regardless of the world's climate, one thing that they can be sure of is that they can depend on their school district to act on their behalf as best we can. That's why our number one core commitment is to be student centered in our decision-making.

As the week progressed and I began to engage with more of our students and their families heart to heart, it became evident how critical it was for me to stop in the midst of the ceremonies to respond to the current unrest in our country.

First, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the murder of George Floyd and any other human being who has died senselessly as the result of violence and brutality. We denounce all violence and these tragic events must serve as a reminder that we still have much work to do in creating a more inclusive and understanding environment – for our students, the community and beyond. Racism is as real and predictable as snow in the Midwest. No matter how frustrated we become with it or how disruptive it is to our lives we know it's inevitable. I believe this is why the country is in the position we are in today. We are exhausted from our frustrations going unheard.

As a district, we have a responsibility to make sure we are doing our part to ensure that we are inclusive and equitable in all that we do. In addition, we are fostering opportunities for our staff and leadership to learn and grow in our ability to serve those who come from diverse backgrounds.

I am a black man first and my professional status will always be second. Whether I am the Superintendent and CEO of the fourth largest school district in Ohio, or a young black man on the East Side, trying to make something of himself, I learned quickly that I had to be extraordinary just to be perceived as ordinary. I am aware first hand of the struggles that our students face every day. When I became an educator, I wanted to show my students and every young person I had the chance to work with, that they mattered. They are valued. They are important and that they are much bigger than any struggle that could come their way. Their current situation does not have to be their final destination.

In the Toledo Public Schools district, our students of color are our largest demographic. We serve more students of color than any district in our region. We serve students from all walks of life and we are proud of that. In fact, we are honored to serve such a diverse population of young people who bring their uniqueness, their experiences and their culture with them every day, making us who we are and leaving us better than who we were before they came.

I want the students, families and staff members of TPS to know that we will not sit idle. We will continue to create spaces that allow you to share your experiences, joys, frustrations and concerns while working together to create solutions. We will continue to prepare you to use your voice because it is powerful beyond measure.

We stand alongside you in your demand for justice. Know that as your Superintendent, you can always count on me to have your back, support you and keep you safe and secure. We are our brother and sister's keeper and together we shall rise.

We are TPS Proud.

Dr. Romules Durant